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The Evolving Terrorist Threat to Southeast Asia

A Net Assessment

Peter Chalk, Angel Rabasa, William Rosenau, Leanne Piggott

Prepared for The Office of the Secretary of Defense

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NATIONAL DEFENSE RESEARCH INSTITUTE



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Preface

This monograph, prepared by the RAND Corporation and the Centre for International Security Studies in Australia, develops a net assessment against which to gauge the scope and parameters of the terrorist threat to Southeast Asia and, by extension, U.S. security interests in the region. Its main purpose is to enhance understanding of the dangers posed by politically motivated violence in Southeast Asia and to recommend improvements to U.S. counterterrorism (CT) policy, which, if implemented, would reduce the terrorist threat to the stability of this important region.

Building on prior RAND research undertaken to analyze the underlying motives, drivers, and capabilities of the principal extremist groups that have resorted to terrorist violence in the Philippines, southern Thailand, and across the Indonesian archipelago, this study examined the historical roots of militancy in these regions to provide context for assessing the degree to which local agendas are being either subsumed within a broader ideological framework or shaped by other extremist movements. To illuminate some of these connections, this monograph analyzes the organizational structure, cohesion, and ideology of Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), the most dangerous of the various disparate jihadist groups operating in this part of the world, and assesses its capacity to exploit and aggravate established Islamist conflicts in Southeast Asia. It also includes a dedicated appendix that breaks new ground in exploring the potential for Cambodia to emerge as an attack or logistical hub for terrorists over the next five years.

By definition, a comprehensive terrorism assessment must include more than just a threat evaluation. Any meaningful analysis needs to take into account the thoroughness and relevance of government countermeasures and capabilities. Accordingly, this monograph examines the effectiveness of the key national security strategies that have been enacted by the three regional states that are presently most affected by terrorism—Thailand, the Philippines, and Indonesia—as well as the impact of U.S. CT and law enforcement assistance that has been provided to each of these countries.

The subsequent gap analysis should help to provide a comprehensive picture of the overall terrorist environment in Southeast Asia and the specific nature of the militant support networks currently operating in this part of the world. It is hoped that these findings will assist the United States and regional partner-nation governments to better shape and refine the parameters of their respective assistance programs and mitigation efforts.

This research was sponsored by the Australian Federal Police and the Office of the Secretary of Defense and conducted within the International Security and Defense Policy Center of the RAND National Defense Research Institute, a federally funded research and development center sponsored by the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff, the Unified Combatant Commands, the Department of the Navy, the Marine Corps, the defense agencies, and the defense Intelligence Community. Comments are welcome and may be directed to the principal investigator, Peter Chalk, at Peter_Chalk@rand.org.

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Summary

The Current Terrorist Threat

Overall, the terrorist threat to the countries covered in this monograph remains a serious but largely manageable security problem. In Thailand, while the scale and scope of Islamist-inspired violence in the three southern Malay provinces of Yala, Pattani, and Narathiwat have become more acute since 2004, the conflict has (thus far) not spread to the country's majority non-Muslim population nor has it taken on an anti-Western dimension.¹ Indeed, at the time of this writing, outside demagogues and radicals had singularly failed to gain any concerted logistical or ideological foothold in the region, which suggests that Thailand's so-called "deep south" is unlikely to become a new hub for furthering the transregional designs of fundamentalist jihadi elements.

In the Philippines, Moro Muslim extremism has declined markedly since its high point in the 1990s and early 2000s. The Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) and Misuari Breakaway Group (MBG) both remain factionalized with the bulk of their existing cadres mostly confined to isolated pockets across the Sulu archipelago. The leadership and

¹ In this monograph, *Islamist* is used when describing Islam as a religiopolitical phenomenon. The term is an immediate derivation of *Islamism*, which has its moorings in significant events of the 20th century, such as the Iranian Revolution, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and the Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation. It is distinguished from *Islamic*, which is more correctly understood as signifying religion and culture as it has developed over the past millennium of Islam's history. For more on these terminological nuances, see Denoeux, 2002; Roy, 1994; and 9/11 Commission Report, 2004, p. 562, fn. 3.

mainstream membership of the largest and best-equipped Moro rebel group, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), appears sincere in its stated desire to reach a comprehensive peace settlement, despite the breakdown of a cease-fire reached in July 2003. Although a perceptible communist threat continues to exist, the New People's Army (NPA) has witnessed a steady decline in numbers and weapons. Moreover, the NPA's ability to fully control those areas that it has infiltrated, which presently amount to only 5 percent of the country's total, is declining.

The situation in Indonesia is somewhat more fluid. On the one hand, the latent threat posed by Islamist radicalism has patently declined since 2000, reflecting both more effective CT actions on the part of the police and widespread popular opposition to militant groups whose attacks have disproportionately affected Muslim interests. On the other hand, a significant minority of the Indonesian population harbors a desire for some form of fundamentalist Islamic political order, which under certain circumstances could spark a resurgence of support for extremist jihadism if not carefully managed and countered.

The threat environment in Indonesia also has direct relevance for transnational terrorism in Southeast Asia, not least because the country plays host to JI. Although the network has been substantially weakened by the arrests of several leading midlevel commanders, as well as internal disputes over the utility of large-scale, indiscriminate bombings, it has demonstrated a proven capacity to adapt and will probably never be fully expunged as a movement of radical ideas.

Counterterrorism Responses

A true assessment of the current terrorist environment in Southeast Asia must take into account the nature and appropriateness of state responses. Again, there is reason for guarded optimism here. In Thailand, the government has gradually come to appreciate the virtues of more nuanced, dialogue-based approaches to conflict mitigation in the southern border provinces. The new emphasis on development and "soft" hearts-and-minds initiatives is likely to continue regardless of the political complexion of future Thai governments.

In the Philippines, the armed forces have made significant progress in defense reform and civil-military relations and are now reaping significant rewards in the ongoing battle against Islamist and Moro extremists in Mindanao. The admittedly halting negotiations with MILF have made progress, and, with the notable exception of ancestral domain, most outstanding issues have now been settled. Manila has also made headway against the NPA insurgency through a combination of “hard” and “soft” security policies aimed at normalizing (former) hostile communist areas.

Finally, in Indonesia, the central government has fully committed to professionalizing the police force and ensuring that it is internationally recognized as adept and accountable. In addition, Jakarta is slowly augmenting what hitherto have been very weak coastal surveillance capabilities, and it now recognizes the need for a concerted deradicalization program. Most significantly, the government has established a credible and effective CT unit—Special Detachment [Detasmen Khusus] 88—which reports directly to the military and has been credited with the neutralization of at least 450 militants since 2005.

Policy Recommendations

While U.S. security assistance to Southeast Asia has been important to the development of a more efficacious regional CT strategy and structure, much more could be done to inoculate this part of the world against the possibility of a renewed terrorist threat, from either domestic extremists or an emboldened transborder jihadist network. Accordingly, this monograph offers the following recommendations.

Better integrate CT, law and order, and development policies to address the issue of corruption in the region. This enduring and pervasive problem not only fuels resentment against incumbent governments, it also sustains popular support for extremist groups. It is crucially important that elected officials, bureaucrats, and other representatives of the state are able to win the trust and confidence of their own communities and thereby deny terrorists the political influence they need to grow their support and mount effective operations.

Promote further police reform in the Philippines and Thailand. This could certainly be done through the current bilateral suite of assistance that is provided through the U.S. Department of State (DoS) Anti-terrorism Assistance (ATA) program, International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement (INCLE) program, and International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program (ICITAP). However, the United States should additionally consider sponsoring a much broader program of professional training through nascent but proven multi-lateral arrangements. Entities such as the Jakarta Centre for Law Enforcement Cooperation (JCLEC), the Southeast Asia Regional Centre for Counter-Terrorism (SEARCCT), and the International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA) in Bangkok all offer the major advantage of bringing practitioners together in a single organizational setting where professional networks can be built and ideas and perspectives on terrorism and CT can be exchanged and debated.

Foster a less benign environment for terrorism in Southeast Asia by increasing support for regional institutions, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the ASEAN Regional Forum, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, and the East Asia Summit. Channeling security and CT assistance through these collaborative frameworks will help reduce the perception that terrorism is an exclusively American problem. It will also provide an opportunity to buttress indigenous capabilities in areas where Washington is unable to operate bilaterally for political or logistical reasons.

Press all 10 ASEAN countries to sign and ratify each of the 16 United Nations (UN) conventions dealing with CT. Although political agreement was reached at the Jakarta Sub-Regional Ministerial Meeting in March 2007 on the need to strengthen legal CT tools, the fact remains that many Southeast Asian countries have yet to enact a broad range of conventions and protocols relating to terrorism.

Emphasize the use of soft power to enhance local governance in regions susceptible to fundamentalist propaganda (through INCLE); foster greater military and police awareness of human rights and appropriate rules of engagement (through U.S. Department of Defense-sponsored International Military Education Training program, or IMET, courses); and promote general socioeconomic development (through the U.S. Agency

for International Development [USAID] and DoS Economic Support Fund, or ESF). To ensure that these types of endeavors have a long-term, sustainable impact, it is critical that they be carried out in close cooperation with national and local authorities and are executed with due regard for community consultation in civic action planning.

Supplement the use of soft power with “smart” power. This can be achieved by (1) spearheading public diplomacy, exchange, and educational efforts to discredit perverted interpretations of Islam; (2) empowering moderate Muslim leaders as voices for greater religious negotiation; (3) investigating possible alternatives for reducing the pull of pan-regional sentiment from the inside out, by ascertaining the extent to which emergent fissures between JI’s mainstream and the pro-bombing faction can be exploited; and (4) promoting prison reform to reduce the potential for jails to be exploited as recruiting or radicalization hubs. These dialogue and communication initiatives should focus not only on Southeast Asian states with established militant Islamic entities but also on countries that could foster or otherwise encourage hardline Islamist sentiment. Notable in this regard is Malaysia, where a more radical, “enabling” environment could emerge if divisions within the Malay community widen as a result of domestic political instability.

Give greater attention to identifying and supporting conventional and nonconventional broadcasting and message-delivery systems that can be effectively utilized in a multilayered communication strategy aimed at countering the proselytizing activities of extremist groups. Properly employed, these conduits could be highly effective in prosecuting the “struggle of ideas”—not least by targeting and influencing those sectors that are most able to bolster the middle ground of political compromise and, through this, foster an environment that is hostile (or at least nonreceptive) to the appeal of violent Islam.

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Abbreviations

ABRI	Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia
AFP	Armed Forces of the Philippines
AKKBB	Aliansi Kebangsaan untuk Kebebasan Beragama dan Berkeyakinan
AMIN	Angkatan Mujahidin Islam Nusantara
ANFO	ammonium nitrate–fuel oil
ARMM	Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao
ASG	Abu Sayyaf Group
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ATA	Antiterrorism Assistance program
BAKIN	Badan Koordinasi Intelijen Negara
BIAF	Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces
BIN	Badan Intelijen Nasional
BNPP	Barisan Nasional Pembebasan Patani
BRIMOB	Brigade Mobil
BRN	Barisan Revolusi Nasionale
BRN-K	Barisan Revolusi Nasional–Koordinasi

CMO	civil-military operation
CNS	Council for National Security
COIN	counterinsurgency
CPM	Civilian-Police-Military Task Force
CPP	Communist Party of the Philippines
CT	counterterrorism
DI	Darul Islam
DoD	U.S. Department of Defense
DoJ	U.S. Department of Justice
DoS	U.S. Department of State
ESF	Economic Support Fund
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FMF	Foreign Military Financing program
FKAWJ	Forum Komunikasi Ahlus Sunnah wal Jama'ah
FPI	Front Pembela Islam
GAM	Gerakan Aceh Merdeka
GMIP	Gerakan Mujahidin Islam Patani
GRP	government of the Republic of the Philippines
GWOT	global war on terrorism
HRW	Human Rights Watch
HTI	Hizb ut-Tahrir Indonesia
HuT	Hizb ut-Tahrir
ICG	International Crisis Group

ICITAP	International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program
IED	improvised explosive device
ILEA	International Law Enforcement Academy
ILPS	International League of People's Struggle
INCLE	International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement program
IMET	International Military Education and Training program
ISOC	Internal Security Operations Command
JCLEC	Jakarta Centre for Law Enforcement Cooperation
JI	Jemaah Islamiyah
JUSMAG-P	Joint U.S. Military Assistance Group–Philippines
KLI	Komando Laskar Islam
KM	Komite Aksi Penanggulangan Akibat Krisis Mujahidin
KOMPAK	Komite Aksi Penanggulangan Akibat Krisis
LJ	Laskar Jihad
LM	Laskar Mujahidin
LPSA	Local Peace and Security Assembly
MBG	Misuari Breakaway Group
MILF	Moro Islamic Liberation Front
MoA-AD	memorandum of agreement on ancestral domain
MNLF	Moro National Liberation Front
MoU	memorandum of understanding

NDF	National Democratic Front
NGO	nongovernmental organization
NISP	National Internal Security Plan
NPA	New People's Army
OIC	Organization of the Islamic Conference
OPM	Organisasi Papua Merdeka
PNP	Philippine National Police
POLRI	Indonesian National Police
PULO	Patani United Liberation Organization
PUPJI	Pedoman Umum Perjuangan Al-Jama'ah Al-Islamiyyah
RKK	<i>runda kumpulan kecil</i> [dedicated military wing]
RSIM	Rajah Solieman Islamic Movement
RTA	Royal Thai Army
RTP	Royal Thai Police
SBPAC	Southern Borders Provinces Administrative Centre
S/CT	U.S. Department of State Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism
SEARCCT	Southeast Asia Regional Centre for Counter-Terrorism
SEDZ	Special Economic Development Zone
SKP	Salipada K. Pendatun
SPDC	Special Peace and Development Council
SWAT	special weapons and tactics

TECD	Terrorism Eradication Coordinating Desk
TIP	Terrorism Interdiction Program
TNI	Tentara Nasional Indonesia
TTCTF	Terrorism and Transnational Crime Task Force
UN	United Nations
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development

Introduction

Terrorism is not new to Southeast Asia. Indeed, for much of the Cold War, the activities of a variety of domestic ethnonationalist and religious militant groups posed what was arguably one of the most significant challenges to the internal stability of several countries across the region. These violent organizations arose in reaction to the unwillingness of many Southeast Asian governments to acknowledge or recognize the right of minority self-determination. Such reticence essentially owed itself to an implicit fear that acceding to even limited ethnonationalist demands would result in an unstoppable secessionist tide, challenging the very basis of statehood that underscored Southeast Asian post-colonial identity (Acharya, 1993, p. 19; see also Christie, 1996; Jeshurun, 1985; Joo-Jock and Vani, 1984; D. Brown, 1994; Findlay, 1996; and Nathan, 1997).

Since the 1990s, however, the residual challenge posed by substate militant extremism has risen, in reaction to both the force of modernization pursued so vigorously by many Southeast Asian governments and the political influence of Islam—which has, itself, been further amplified by the contemporary force of South Asian (and, more specifically, Afghan) radicalism (Christie, 1996, pp. 207–208; D. Brown, 1994; von der Mehden, 1996; Reilly, 2002; Tan, 2004; and Kurlantzick, 2001).

In the southern Philippines, an ongoing Moro insurgency continues to disrupt stability, investment, and local development, and, in stark contrast to the character of its original inception, now has an explicitly religious bent. Three groups remain at the forefront of mili-

tant action in this part of the country: the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), and the Misuari Breakaway Group (MBG). Complicating matters in the country is an entrenched communist-terrorist insurgency that is seeking the establishment of a Maoist state through protracted people's war and that continues to benefit from popular disillusionment borne out of government corruption and extreme socioeconomic inequities. The New People's Army (NPA) stands at the forefront of this challenge and, though weakened, continues to demonstrate an ability to disrupt and operate on a national basis.

In southern Thailand, violence associated with Malay Muslim separatism has been a recurrent problem since the late 1960s. The overall scale of unrest, however, has risen dramatically since 2004 to the extent that the so-called "deep south" is now in the throes of what amounts to a full-scale ethnoreligious insurgency. Although it lacks clear organizational coherence and strategic direction, the present generation of militants operating in southern Thailand have taken their struggle to a level of violence and brutality not previously witnessed and, over the past four years, have been instrumental in carrying out repeated attacks against local administrators, politicians, police, Buddhist temples, and schools. Moreover, the current manifestation of Malay Muslim militant extremism has been marked by an explicit jihadist undertone that is seriously threatening to unravel the fabric of communal relations in this part of the country.

In Indonesia, Islamic extremism has emerged as an increasingly salient threat since the demise of the Soeharto regime in 1998. In particular, a dramatic reawakening of atavistic Muslim identity has combined with a more fluid domestic environment to dangerously exacerbate and radicalize popular sentiment across the archipelago. This has, in turn, helped foster the formation of a newer generation of jihadist movements variously dedicated to the establishment of a fundamentalist order in Indonesia and/or a wider caliphate in Southeast Asia.

Intelligence and government sources in Washington have viewed these developments with considerable consternation, expressing fears that Southeast Asia is now a major springboard for local and wider acts of international terrorism that has direct relevance for Western

security, political, and economic interests. Indeed, various manifestations of politically motivated extremism sourced out of the region are presently counted as—if not the number-one security challenge and research priority in the United States—a principal focus of concern.

Problemsatically, to date, however, most of the attention paid to terrorism in Southeast Asia has tended to emphasize response contingencies and crisis management at the expense of systematic risk vulnerability assessments. As a result, policy has often been shaped by preconceived and, in many cases, unsubstantiated threat scenarios. Absent has been the type of comprehensive, empirically grounded analysis that is critical to prioritizing and marshaling resources across intelligence, informational, law enforcement, first responder, and community jurisdictions.

Accordingly, this monograph aims to provide a holistic depiction of the overall terrorist environment in Southeast Asia by considering the issue from the “red” (adversary), “blue” (partner-nation), and “green” (partner-nation populace) perspectives. The study had three main objectives:

- first, to provide an informed appreciation of the motivations, aims, modus operandi, and effectiveness of regional terrorist groups, the methods by which they entrench themselves in local civilian populations, and the extent to which they interact across national boundaries
- second, to weigh the effectiveness of partner-nation efforts in Southeast Asia to (1) address underlying political, military, social, economic, and infrastructure conditions that foster extremist violence; (2) mitigate the traction or pull of militant ideology and propaganda; and (3) disrupt terrorist network effects
- third, to audit the relevance and appropriateness of existing U.S. internal security, civil-military, socioeconomic, and governance support to partner-nations in Southeast Asia.

This monograph is divided into three main sections. Chapters Two through Five examine the contemporary threat environment in Southeast Asia, focusing on established conflict zones in the Philip-

pines, southern Thailand, and Indonesia and the regional challenge posed by Jemaah Islamiyah (JI). Chapters Six through Eight discuss the principal elements of Philippine, Thai, and Indonesian national security and counterterrorism (CT) strategies analyzing their effectiveness in ameliorating the contemporary terrorist challenge to regional states. Chapters Nine and Ten describe the main parameters of existing U.S. security assistance to Southeast Asia and assess how future programs can be structured to ensure the best possible CT outcomes. Finally, the monograph includes a dedicated appendix that examines emergent or potential operational and logistical hubs in Cambodia.

Malay Muslim Extremism in Southern Thailand

Militant Context

Background to the Southern Thai Conflict

Islamic fundamentalist violence in Thailand centers on the separatist activities of the Malay Muslim population in the country's southern provinces of Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat.¹ Historically part of the former Kingdom of Patani,² three main pillars have traditionally underscored Malay separatist identity in this region: (1) a belief in the virtues and "greatness" of the Kingdom of Patani (Patani Darulsalam); (2) an identification with the Malay race; and (3) a religious orientation based on Islam. These base ingredients are woven together in the tripartite doctrine of *hirja* (flight), *imam* (faith), and *jihad* (holy war), which collectively asserts that all Muslim communities have both a right and duty to withdraw from and resist any form of persecution

¹ The population of these three provinces is roughly 1.8 million, of which approximately 79 percent are Muslim. Satun, which is also a majority Muslim province in the south, has largely been spared the violence that has afflicted the aforementioned three regions. This probably reflects the nature of ethnoreligious identity in the province, which has historically been more accepting of assimilation with Thailand, given that it was never part of the historic Patani Darul Kingdom (author interviews, Pattani, September 2006, and Bangkok, September 2007).

² This is the Malay spelling of the province. The name refers to the Sultanate of Patani and is used by ethnic Malay Muslim groups to express their aspiration for full independence from the Thai state. *Pattani*, which is used throughout this chapter, is the official transliteration employed by the central government in Bangkok.

that is serving to place their survival in jeopardy (see Bailey and Miksic, 1989, p. 151, and Christie, 1996, p. 133).

The roots of indigenous Malay Muslim dissatisfaction and perceived discrimination trace back to the establishment of the modern Thai/Siamese state by the Chakkri Dynasty in the 18th century, when a vigorous attempt was made to extend central control over Patani. Although the local population was initially able to resist external penetration, the entire kingdom had been brought under effective Siamese rule by the late 1700s. During the 19th century, increasingly uniform, centralized bureaucratic structures were introduced throughout the region to forestall the steady expansion of British colonial influence throughout the Malay peninsula.³ As part of this process, chieftains in the Patani rajadoms were absorbed into the salaried administration—effectively becoming Siamese civil servants. In addition, a conscious effort was made to reduce the range of issues that Islamic law could independently deal with by extending the jurisdiction and ambit of the Siamese legal system (Liefer, 1996, p. 35).⁴

The pace of assimilation gathered momentum during the 1930s, when several key modifications were introduced. The country's name was changed from Siam to Thailand,⁵ and the old local government structure, which had at least allowed some autonomous Malay political representation, was replaced by a simpler, more Bangkok-oriented system. In addition, three provincial units were carved from the original Patani region—Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat—all of which were placed under the direct control of the ministry of the interior. A modernization program was also initiated to eliminate “backward” Islamic customs and dialects and to enforce uniformity in language and social behavior. As part of this latter endeavor, Western cultural and customary habits were stressed and steps were taken to completely phase out

³ Author interview, Pattani, September 2007.

⁴ For detailed discussions on the roots of Malay Muslim separatism in southern Thailand, see Pitsuwan, 1985; Aphornsuvan, 2004; May, 1992, p. 403; Tugby and Tugby, 1989, pp. 73–77; Alagappa, 1987, p. 200; Mudmarn, 1994, p. 24; Farouk, 1984, pp. 235–236.

⁵ The word *Thai* is a social construct that literally means *free* but has since been adopted as the symbolic basis of Thailand's national identity.

sharia law. All of these moves were undertaken in accordance with the so-called “Thai way,” which has since defined three main pillars for state identity: *chat*, *sasana*, and *kasat* (nation, religion—in effect, Buddhism—and the monarchy).⁶

It was within this context that Haji Sulong, chairman of the Patani Provincial Islamic Council, created the Patani People’s Movement to champion demands for regional autonomy, cultural rights, and the implementation of Islamic legal precepts.⁷ Arrested by the nationalist military government of Field Marshal Phibun Songkhram in 1947, Sulong was allegedly killed by the authorities in 1952. His presumed murder instantly transformed him into a central symbol of ethnic Malay Muslim resistance, which, seven years later, gave rise to the first organized separatist group in the south, the Patani National Liberation Front (Barisan Nasional Pembelaan Patani, or BNPP) (HRW, 2007, pp. 14–15; Rahimmula, 2005, pp. 7–8).

During the intervening 50 years, a variety of militant entities have operated across Yala, Narathiwat, and Pattani. Initially zones of dissidence characterized by, if anything, only sullen submission to Bangkok’s rule, the situation in the three provinces has since deteriorated to the extent that the so-called “deep south” is now beset by what amounts to almost daily violence and internecine communal conflict.

The Malay Muslim Militant Struggle

The Malay Muslim militant struggle can be divided into three broad phases: 1960–1998, 1998–2004, and 2004 to the present.

1960–1998

Between 1960 and 1998, some 60 extremist separatist movements were estimated to have been in operation across the southern Thai provinces,

⁶ Author interviews, Bangkok and Pattani, September 2007; see also Ball, 2004, p. 5; Christie, 1996, pp. 176–177; May, 1992, p. 403; Haemindra, 1976, p. 205; Thomas, 1982, p. 160; Pitsuwan, 1985, pp. 37–44; and Wilson, 1989, pp. 59–60.

⁷ In Bangkok, as long as one buys into and accepts the three pillars of Thai nation-building, one is considered part of that society. This is problematic, as Malay Muslims will never subscribe to this concept. The root of the conflict in the south is, thus, a direct clash of national identity.

many of which benefited from safe havens in the northern Malaysian state of Kelantan (allegedly with the blessing of the ruling Parti Islam se-Malaysia).⁸ Of these, four were at the forefront of the bulk of militant activity: the National Revolution Front (Barisan Revolusi Nasionale, or BRN); the Patani United Liberation Organization, or PULO (Bertubuhan Pembebasan Patani Bersatu); New PULO; and the Islamic Mujahidin Movement of Patani (Gerakan Mujahidin Islam Patani, or GMIP). Although each was characterized by different ideological and operational outlooks, these groups were motivated by a common desire to carve out an independent Muslim state with Pattani as the center. Violent action in pursuit of this objective typically fell into the classic pattern of low-intensity conflict, generally involving ambushes, kidnappings, assassinations, extortion, sabotage, and bomb attacks. The main aim was to present the southern provinces as an area that remained beyond the sovereign control of Bangkok, to create a sense of insecurity among ethnic Thais living in the region, and to place additional pressure on the central government to accede to the political demands of Malay Muslim separatism.⁹

In August 1997, the leaders of BRN, PULO, New PULO, and GMIP agreed to form a tactical alliance in an attempt to refocus national and regional attention on the “southern question” (HRW, 2007, p. 15). Operating under the banner of the United Front for the Independence of Patani (Barisan Kemerdekaan Patani, commonly known as Bersatu), the four groups carried out a coordinated series of bombing, shooting, and incendiary attacks—code-named *Falling Leaves*¹⁰—that resulted in nine deaths, several dozen injuries, and considerable economic damage. At the time, the jointly orchestrated strikes marked the most serious upsurge of Malay Muslim separatist activity

⁸ It should be noted that a number of these organizations operated in a gray zone of violence motivated by ethnic Malay Muslim consciousness on the one end to straight crime on the other. As HRW notes, this nexus allowed separatist insurgents to recruit from criminal syndicates and vice versa (see HRW, 2007, p. 15, fn. 11).

⁹ For further details on these groups, see Chalk, 2002; Indorf, 1984; Farouk, 1984; May, 1992; and ICG, 2005b.

¹⁰ This code name was reputedly chosen because the intent of the attacks was apparently to kill off symbols of the Thai state in the same manner that leaves fall from trees.

since the early 1980s (Chalk, 1998, p. 122; “Chronology of Southern Violence,” 1998; ICG, 2005b, p. 14).

Falling Leaves was certainly instrumental in heightening the overall visibility of the Muslim cause in Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat. However, the operation also dramatically increased regional pressure on Malaysia to step up cross-border cooperation, with Bangkok arguing that the attacks could not have been carried out without the benefit of a secure militant safe haven in Kelantan. Kuala Lumpur duly responded, marking a major shift in the government’s hands-off approach to what it had traditionally referred to as a purely domestic Thai problem. The change in policy—which came with the specific approval of Prime Minister Mohamad Mathathir¹¹—both deprived BRN, PULO, New PULO, and GMIP of an important source of external sanctuary and resulted in the detention of several separatist leaders and midlevel commanders (“Separatists Arrested in Malaysia,” 1998; “Secrets of the South,” 1998; “Arrests in the South Boost Malaysian Ties, Security,” 1998; “Terrorist Suspects Arrested in South,” 1998). These setbacks triggered a major tactical reassessment on the part of the four groups’ mainstream membership, many of whom subsequently fled abroad or took advantage of a government-sponsored amnesty program and surrendered directly to authorities (Noiwong, 2001; HRW, 2007, pp. 15–16; “Net Closing in on Rebels in Malaysia,” 1998; “Malaysians Hand Over Separatists,” 1998; “KL Decides It Is Time to Help,” 1998).

¹¹ Mathathir’s willingness to quickly crack down on PULO and New PULO activists in Kelantan almost certainly reflected his awareness of the need to maintain cordial relations with Bangkok to protect the much touted (and publicized) Malaysia-Indonesia-Thailand Growth Triangle. Indeed, the arrests came on the heels of earlier visits by the Thai interior minister, foreign minister, deputy foreign minister, and chief of police—all of whom specifically warned that, unless Kuala Lumpur stepped up efforts to control violence in the south, closer cross-border economic cooperation (which was and continues to be critical to the success of the growth triangle) would be curtailed (see “Border Breakthrough,” 1998; “PM: Peace in South Vital to Growth Triangle,” 1998; “Is It So Hard to Be a Good Neighbor?” 1998; “Malaysia’s Policy Shift to Benefit South,” 1998; and “Surin Set to Seek Malaysian Help in Curbing Terrorists,” 1998).

The resultant internal hemorrhaging was decisive and had, by 2000, essentially crippled the separatist movement in southern Thailand.¹²

1998–2004

The scale of unrest in the southern provinces dropped markedly in the late 1990s. Certainly, the effective demise of BRN, PULO, New PULO, and GMIP was highly relevant in this regard. Just as importantly, however, were signs (albeit short-lived, as discussed later) that the Thai government was beginning to show somewhat more sensitivity to the lack of economic and administrative development in Yala, Pattani, and Narathiwat. Not only did Bangkok pledge to promote the region's natural resources and invest greater sums in occupational training for local Malays, moves were also made to enhance police, military, and political understanding of the unique Malay Muslim way of life (see, e.g., Islam, 1998, p. 452). Much of this latter endeavor was directed through the Southern Borders Provinces Administrative Centre (SBPAC) and the Civilian-Police-Military Task Force (CPM) 43, both of which had first been established in 1981 to educate bureaucrats and security officials in cultural awareness and the local Pattani language (known by Thais as *Jawi*) as well as to formulate broad-ranging policies for ameliorating the conflict (ICG, 2005b, pp. 34–35).¹³

The respite in violence proved to be only temporary, however, largely because the Thai government failed to capitalize on the militants' disarray by quickly winning over the local population through the initiation of a genuine hearts-and-minds campaign. Undertakings to lift the overall economic and unemployment situation of the south were largely not carried through, nor were there any directed efforts to

¹² According to Thai authorities, only 70 to 80 separatist militants remained active in the southern border provinces by 2000, with 1,000 having taken advantage of the government-sponsored rehabilitation program and another 200 living abroad in exile (statement by the Thai Senate armed services committee during a parliament radio broadcast on March 14, 2006).

¹³ The SBPAC was attached to the interior ministry, while the CPM 43 was placed under the Internal Security Operation Command (ISOC) of the prime minister's office (HRW, 2007, p. 16).

increase Malay Muslim participation in regional business and administration.¹⁴ Equally, on assuming power in 2001, the newly elected government of Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra dismantled both the SBPAC and CPM 43—two multiagency mechanisms that had demonstrated at least partial success in engendering a sense of ownership among local populations to their problems and solutions.¹⁵ In addition, he transferred responsibility for the security of the southern border region from the Royal Thai Army (RTA) to the police, which resulted in the politicization of security policy and the weakening of overall intelligence-gathering capabilities on the ground.¹⁶

The first signs of a return to violence surfaced at the end of 2001, when a series of well-coordinated attacks on police posts in Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat left five officers and one village defense volunteer dead. The level of unrest gathered pace during the next two years—rising from 75 incidents in 2002 to 119 in 2003—dramatically escalating in the first few months of 2004 with a series of highly audacious operations (ICG, 2005b, p. 16; A. Davis, 2004b). January saw one of the most brazen robberies ever to have taken place in the south, in which a group of roughly 100 unidentified Muslims raided a Thai army camp in Narathiwat and made off with more than 300 weapons, including assault rifles, machine guns, and rocket-propelled grenades. Two equally bold operations quickly followed suit. The first occurred on March 30 and involved masked gunmen who descended on a quarry in the Muang district of Yala and successfully stole 1.6 metric tons of

¹⁴ In 2002, for instance, Yala, Narathiwat, and Pattani still “enjoyed” a per capita income that was roughly 7,000 baht less than that of neighboring provinces. In addition, some 80 percent of the region’s civil-service administration was non-Malay (a ratio that largely exists to this day) (author interviews, Pattani, September 2006).

¹⁵ Thaksin’s decision to dismantle the SBPAC and CPM 43 reportedly reflected his concern that the two bodies were staffed by officials whose loyalties flowed primarily to the opposition Democrats rather than to him and his government. In addition, it was predicated on the assumption that the collapse of BRN, PULO, New PULO, and GMIP had dealt a death blow to insurgent activities in the south (HRW, 2007, p. 29; A. Davis, 2004a, p. 24; ICG, 2005b, pp. 33–34; “Cabinet to Dissolve Two Security Agencies,” 2002).

¹⁶ Author interviews, Pattani, September 2006. See also ICG, 2005b, pp. 34–35, and HRW, 2007, p. 29.

ammonium nitrate, 56 sticks of dynamite, and 176 detonators. The second, known as the Krue Se Mosque siege, took place on April 28, when machete-wielding militants attempted to overrun a string of police positions and military armories in Pattani. Ultimately, 108 attackers were killed in the incident, 31 of them shot after seeking refuge in the central Krue Se Mosque (one of Islam's holiest sites in Southeast Asia).¹⁷

The events in early 2004 heralded the onset of the most recent and bloody stage of the Malay Muslim struggle.

2004–Present

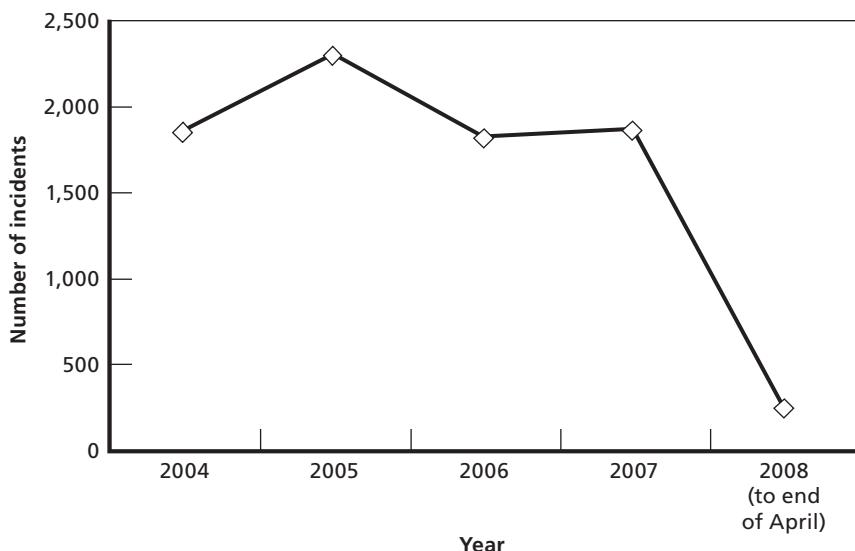
As highlighted in Figures 2.1 and 2.2, over the 52 months from January 2004 to the end of April 2008, a total of 8,064 violent incidents were recorded in southern Thailand; these incidents left 3,002 dead (including 1,264 Buddhists and 1,624 Muslims) and another 4,871 injured (including 2,908 Buddhists and 1,484 Muslims).¹⁸ While civilians have been the hardest hit—accounting for more than 70 percent of all fatalities during the period—both the police and military have also suffered significant losses, with casualty counts at the end of August 2007 of 711 and 689, respectively.¹⁹ For a population that numbers only 1.8 million, these figures represent a considerable toll.

¹⁷ Author interviews, Pattani, September 2006, and Bangkok, September 2007; see also ICG, 2005b, pp. 17–23; HRW, 2007, p. 36; and A. Davis, 2005b, p. 27. According to one Western official, the decision to attack the mosque was in direct reaction to the point-blank killing of a Buddhist intermediary who had been dispatched by the army to negotiate with the insurgents.

¹⁸ It should be noted that, during the first half of 2008, the overall number of attacks had dropped compared to statistics for 2007, possibly reflecting more concerted security sweeps initiated by the Thai military (see Chapter Six). However, at the time of this writing, figures for bombings and shootings had once again spiked; moreover, casualty rates per incident remained consistent between January and July 2008, suggesting that individual strike rates were becoming more lethal (author interviews, Bangkok, July 2008).

¹⁹ Statistics provided to the authors in May 2008 by Professor Srisompob Jitpiromsri, Pattani Songkla University. The database maintained by Professor Srisompob is generally recognized as the most comprehensive and accurate information source on violence in southern Thailand.

Figure 2.1
Violent Incidents in Southern Thailand, January 2004–April 2008



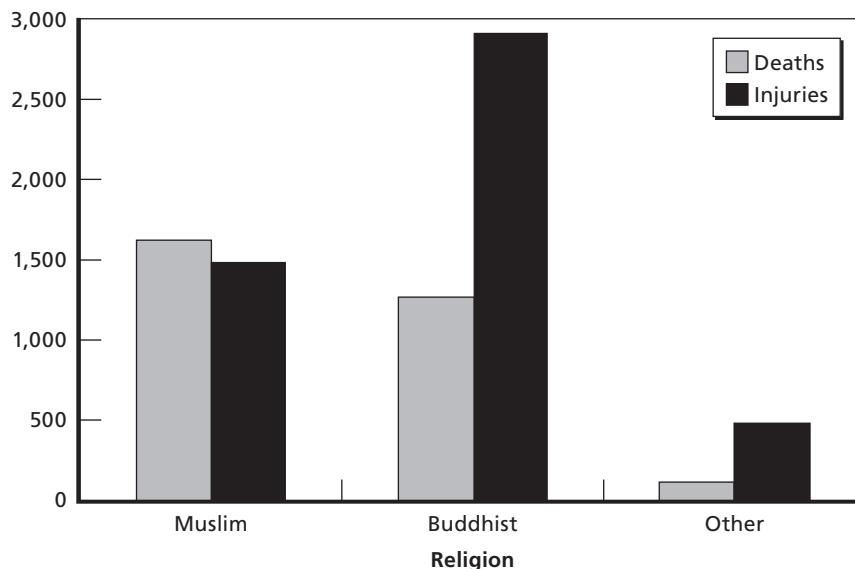
RAND MG846-2.1

In addition to the higher intensity of attacks, much of the violence currently being propagated in the south shows indications of increased sophistication. Improvised explosive devices (IEDs)²⁰ are now routinely detonated with a wide array of triggering mechanisms, ranging from battery-charged hardwire connections and radio remote-controlled devices to mobile phones²¹ and digital watch timers. While the bulk of IEDs are in the 5- to 10-kilogram range, some as large as 50 kilograms

²⁰ IEDs are typically constructed out of gas cylinders, fire extinguishers, plastic storage containers, or aluminum cans packed with a standard ammonium nitrate–fuel oil mix (ANFO) attached to a dynamite booster charge and blasting cap.

²¹ In November 2005, the Thai government mandated that all purchases of prepaid SIM cards had to be accompanied by some sort of identification. This attempt at greater regulation of unregistered cell phones has largely failed, however, primarily because vendors continue to sell cell phones without requiring any form of official registration (author interviews, Bangkok, September 2007).

Figure 2.2
Deaths and Injuries, by Religion, January 2004–April 2008



RAND MG846-2.2

have been employed.²² This would seem to suggest that there currently exists a technical capability to stage highly destructive, strategically oriented bombings should circumstances require them.²³ Indeed, close

²² Author interviews, Pattani, September 2007; see also A. Davis, 2005b, p. 27, and “Thailand: Car Bomb Kills 5 After Premier’s Visit,” 2005. For example, the IED that was used in the March 2008 bombing of the C. S. Pattani—the largest hotel in the province and one that hitherto had been generally regarded as off-limits to militant attacks—involved a 15-kilogram car bomb composed of three fire extinguishers filled with ANFO. The strike left two people dead and 13 injured. The same day, a similarly sized IED exploded prematurely in Yala’s Muang district, and another was defused on board a train in Narathiwat’s Rangae district on June 21, 2008. These devices stand in stark contrast to earlier versions, most of which were in the 5- to 10-kilogram range and concealed in simple, everyday items, such as shopping bags, plastic lunch boxes, and PVC tubing (author interviews, Bangkok, April 2008; see also ICG, 2008c, p. 7).

²³ Author interviews, Pattani, September 2006, and Bangkok, September 2007 and April 2008; see also Asian Aerospace–Thailand, 2007; A. Davis, 2006, p. 20; Abuza, 2007a, p. 3. It should be noted that, according to some Western analysts, IED construction is still fairly crude (particularly with regard to uniformly mixing the components for ANFO) to

observers of the evolving southern insurgency generally concur that the current generation of militants now have both the logistical and technical means to hit large-scale energy and infrastructure targets, including such venues as the joint Thai-Malaysian-owned TTM gas separation plant just outside Hat Yai. Although this particular facility has yet to be struck, the possibility of a future incursion is definitely informing the risk calculations of at least certain elements of the security community in Bangkok.²⁴

The ability to pull off complex operations has equally expanded. Most assaults are now integrated and executed along a full modality spectrum—often embracing explosions, arson, assassinations, and random shootings—to maximize overall impact.²⁵ Coordinated bombings are also surfacing with more regularity. One notable case occurred on April 3, 2005, when simultaneous explosions struck several venues in Hat Yai, including the international airport, the French-owned Carrefour supermarket, and the Green Palace World Hotel (HRW, 2007, p. 87; Abuza, 2007a, p. 3; “Blasts Hit Airport, Hotel and Carrefour,” 2005; “PM Vows Justice for South,” 2005; “Tighter Security at Airports,” 2005). The attacks resonated loudly in Bangkok, as Hat Yai is not only the major wholesale and financial center for the southern border provinces, it also acts as the principal hub for the transshipment of much of the world’s latex rubber (Abuza, 2007a, p. 3). Similar incidents since then have included explosions at more than 60 locations in Yala, Pattani, and Narathiwat on June 15, 2006; a spate of bombings that targeted 22 commercial banks in Yala town on August 31, 2006; attacks against eight car and motorcycle dealerships in Yala’s Muang district on November 9, 2006; the detonation of six IEDs in stores and

the extent that resultant explosive yields are probably 20–30 percent lower than they could potentially be.

²⁴ Author interviews, Bangkok, July 2008. It is not immediately apparent why the facility has yet to be targeted, given its infrastructure prominence and the militants’ own apparent desire to disrupt energy flows. One contributing factor could be TTM’s joint ownership by Kuala Lumpur, which conceivably negates the desire to attack it; another may relate to the plant’s physical location, which, because it is not in the immediate vicinity of the southern border provinces themselves, puts it beyond the operational vision of the rebels.

²⁵ Author interviews, Bangkok, November 2005 and September 2006.

shops located on the main street of Hat Yai on September 16, 2006; 28 coordinated strikes against hotels, karaoke bars, power grids, and commercial sites across Yala, Narathiwat, Pattani, and Songkhla on February 18, 2007; and simultaneous bombings of various venues in Songkhla on May 27, 2007 (HRW, 2007, p. 87; Abuza, 2007a, p. 3; “Bombs Hit 22 Branches in Yala,” 2006; Pinyorat, 2006; “Suspects in Bank Attacks Identified,” 2006; Mydans, 2007).

Apart from intensity and sophistication, the nature of the current bout of instability in the south has been marked by an explicit jihadist undertone of a sort not apparent in past years. Reflective of this have been frequent attacks against drinking houses, gambling halls, karaoke bars, and other establishments associated with Western decadence and secularism; the distribution of leaflets (allegedly printed in Malaysia) highlighting the Thai state as engaged in a systematic campaign to eradicate the Islamic faith and warning local Muslims of reprisals if they do not adhere to traditional religious diktats as specified in the Koran (see Figure 2.3); the systematic expansion of those defined as *monafique* (literally, hypocrites to the faith); and the increased targeting of monks and other Buddhist civilians—often through highly brutal means, such as burnings and beheadings (well over 30 decapitations have occurred since January 2004; HRW, 2007, p. 49)—in an apparent Taliban-style effort to destroy the social fabric by fostering religious-communal fear, conflict, and hatred.²⁶

²⁶ Author interviews, Bangkok, November 2005, April 2006, and July 2008, and Bangkok and Pattani, September 2007. At the time of this writing, there were already signs that the insurgent sectarian-focused strategy was beginning to “work.” According to one Western official, indications of a far more radical stance among the Buddhist population had become apparent—especially in Yala—and there was growing concern that they were on the verge of spilling over into reprisal, tit-for-tat killings. More seriously, allegations of the existence of an anti-Muslim vigilante force have surfaced; according to one Pattani-based academic, it is this “militia” that is primarily responsible for the spate of recent attacks that have been directed at Islamic schools and mosques.

Figure 2.3
Leaflet Portraying the Thai State as a
Rapacious, Anti-Islamic Entity



RAND MG846-2.3

Militant Groupings

Structure and Size

Unlike the earlier phases of violence, there does not seem to be an organizational nucleus of defined groupings behind the current bout of militant and terrorist activity. In the opinion of most commentators, the attacks are the work of an amalgam of extremists drawn from the decimated ranks of New PULO, PULO, BRN, and GMIP; emergent ad hoc Islamist entities operating under the assumed banner of the National Revolutionary Front–Coordinate (Barisan Revolusi Nasional–Koordinasi, or BRN-K); and a random collection of dis-

affected youths, out-of-work farmers, laborers, and tradespeople, and co-opted criminal elements.²⁷

According to Thai and Western officials, this amorphous militant base is loosely organized at the district level and based around five functional divisions: political work and recruitment, economics and finances, women's affairs, youth, and armed activity (HRW, 2007, p. 19). Command and control of these wings falls to a *pemimpin* (the district chief), who oversees five assistant *pemimpin*, each of whom has five deputies who are, in turn, responsible for a village-based cell of 10 commandos (see HRW, 2007, p. 20). While district strike forces typically act independently of one another—deciding for themselves what to hit and when—respective leaders are thought to meet every 45 days to confer on developments taking place in their individual zones or to plan large-scale attacks.²⁸ While some sort of higher leadership core may exist, it is not known whether it is able to provide greater strategic guidance and direction for these operational units. As one official remarked, “This is the key unknown that the security and intelligence services still have to uncover.”²⁹

Actual attacks are reportedly executed by dedicated military wings known as *junwae jihad* in Malay and *runda kumpulan kecil* (RKK)³⁰ in Thai, the members of which are reputedly trained in unarmed combat,

²⁷ Author interviews, Bangkok, July 2008; see also HRW, 2007, p. 18, and A. Davis, 2005a, p. 14. According to one Western diplomat in Bangkok, it is the disillusioned youth who are currently acting as “the major hired guns in the south.”

²⁸ Author interviews, Pattani, September 2007.

²⁹ Author interviews, Bangkok and Pattani, September 2006, September 2007, and April 2008. There have been allegations that the insurgency is receiving strategic direction from a leadership cadre based in Bangkok; at the time of this writing, however, these assertions—which are based on intercepted faxes reputedly sent from the capital to militants in the south—had yet to be proven (author interviews, Bangkok, September 2007 and April 2008).

³⁰ This name derives from an Indonesian military training manual of the same name that reputedly forms the basis of *junwae jihad* training (author interview, Bangkok, September 2007).

weapon handling, bomb making, and sharpshooting.³¹ Available weapons for these squads include grenade launchers, M16 or AK-47 assault rifles, shotguns, pistols, machetes, and knives—most of which are locally made,³² stolen from the security forces, purchased from corrupt or co-opted self-defense militia units, or procured from former PULO, New PULO, and BRN stocks.³³

Estimates of the number of people actively engaged in violent attacks vary from 1,000 to 1,500; if logistical, recruiting, and propaganda personnel are included, that figure rises to anywhere from 3,000 to 5,000, depending on the source cited.³⁴ By September 2007, Thai security officials were estimating that separatists had gained full control of more than 100 of the 1,521 villages in the three southern border provinces.³⁵ Independent local commentators, however, have generally portrayed a far broader militant presence, with most concurring that over 90 percent of the towns and hamlets in Yala, Pattani, and Narathiwat probably have at least one established cell within their confines.³⁶

Goals and Motivational Drivers

The ostensible goal of the current manifestation of the violent struggle in southern Thailand appears to be the creation of a separate Malay

³¹ According to Thai sources, much of this training is provided by “commandos,” who number only between 100 and 200 and are graduates of more advanced combat courses. Exactly who runs these latter modules and where they are conducted is not known, however.

³² According to one Thai-based journalist, more than 300 weapon shops currently exist in southern Thailand (author interview, Bangkok, September 2007).

³³ Author interviews, Bangkok, Pattani, and Yala, September 2007.

³⁴ Author interviews, Pattani, September 2007, and Bangkok, July 2008. It is very difficult to estimate with any real degree of accuracy how many insurgents are currently active in southern Thailand, largely because so many members are “part-timers” or participate only in an ad hoc manner. As one Western official remarked: “I wouldn’t be surprised if on any given day a dozen kids would not be willing to lay down a roadside IED or spike for 100 baht.”

³⁵ Author interviews, Pattani, September 2007. There are 551 villages (*muban*) in Narathiwat, spread across 13 districts (*amphoe*); in Yala, there are 341 villages spread across eight districts; and in Pattani, there are 629 villages spread across 12 districts.

³⁶ Author interviews, Pattani and Bangkok, September 2006.

Muslim state within five years (dating from January 1, 2004). The 1,000-day plan was outlined in a handwritten note recovered during a 2006 search at an Islamic school in Pattani and was allegedly developed by Masaë Useng, a former BRN member who is wanted in connection with an armed robbery in Narathiwat (“Suspects in Bank Attacks Identified,” 2006). The seized document details a campaign of action that has a distinctly Islamist national platform and includes the following seven discrete milestones:

1. Creating public awareness of Islam (religion), Malay (nationality) and Patani homeland, invasion/occupation [by the Thai state] and the struggle for independence; 2. Creating mass support through religious teaching [at various levels, including *tadika*, *ponoh*, private Islamic colleges, and provincial Islamic committees];³⁷ 3. Setting up a secretive organizational structure; 4. Recruiting and training [ethnic Malay Muslim] youth to become militants, aiming to have 3,000-strong well trained and well disciplined troops; 5. Building nationalist and independence struggle ideology among government officials [of ethnic Malay Muslim origin] and ethnic Malay Muslims [of the southern border provinces] who went to work in Malaysia; 6. Launching a new wave of attacks; 7. Declaring a revolution. (Quoted with bracketed text in HRW, 2007, pp. 18–19)

Statements from self-declared militants strongly stress the explicit religious component of the current phase of their conflict, suggesting that this—rather than the Malay nationalism of the sort historically championed by groups such as BRN, PULO, and New PULO—may now be the main motivational driver for violence in the southern border provinces. As one professed member of BRN-K told Human Rights Watch (HRW):

Islam has become much more important for our fight [compared to the previous generation] as the guiding principle. My generation is much more educated in Islam. The guidance of Islam is

³⁷ *Tadika* are village-based Koranic elementary schools; *ponoh* are Islamic boarding schools.

uniting us together, and keeping all of us true to our cause—that is to fight to liberate our land from infidel occupation. . . . We only recruit those who are truly committed to Islam and their Islamic duty to fight for the liberation [of Patani Darulsalam] to join us. They must be pious. . . . Our members must truly believe in their higher cause towards the liberation of our land and our people. This cannot, and will not, be compromised through any negotiations or any deals with the Thai state. (Quoted with bracketed text in HRW, 2007, pp. 20–21)

These assertions have prompted growing speculation that southern Thailand is in the throes of an extremist militant jihadist transformation similar to what has occurred in the Philippines and Indonesia (see Chapters Three and Four).³⁸ Gauging the extent to which this may be occurring is difficult, however. On the one hand, it is evident that there is a definite religious element to many of the attacks that are being perpetrated in the three Malay provinces, reflected by the explicit targeting of bars, gambling dens, “nondevout” Muslims, and Buddhist civilians. Equally, given the general catalytic attraction of revivalist Islamism in the post-9/11 era, it is reasonable to expect that at least some aspects of the Malay Muslim conflict bear off religious ideology and ideas propagated via the Internet.³⁹

That said, there is no evidence that Islamic imperatives have superseded (much less altered) the essential nationalistic dimension of the conflict. In the opinion of most informed commentators, the basic objective remains very much rooted on protecting the region’s unique way of life—from both the perceived unjust incursions of the Thai state and, just as importantly, the unprecedented influx of cross-border movements of trade, commerce, and people—even if this aim is increasingly couched in religious terms.⁴⁰ As the International Crisis Group (ICG) observes, southern Thai militancy “has always been more

³⁸ Such views are routinely articulated in workshops and conferences dealing with substate violence and terrorism in Southeast Asia.

³⁹ Author interview, Bangkok, September 2007 and July 2008.

⁴⁰ This line of reasoning was consistently reaffirmed to the author during interviews in Bangkok, Pattani, and Yala, September 2006, September 2007, and April 2008.

of an ethno-nationalist movement, with Islam as an important aspect, but cast in terms of reasserting ethnic identity rather than religion per se" (ICG, 2005b, p. 25).

Several observers have also raised the possibility that the continual reference to religion may simply be a ploy to garner greater legitimacy for the Malay Muslim struggle⁴¹ or, more basely, to justify wanton violence that has no real purpose beyond its own end.⁴² Excombatants as well as Muslim community elders and leaders have frequently articulated views of the latter sort. In the words of one former senior PULO commander who spoke to HRW,

I fought for years in the jungle against the Thai state. I am still very much a[n ethnic Malay Muslim] nationalist and still dream of a free Patani Darulsalam. I will never hesitate to take up arms to fight again. But not like this, not the way this generation is conducting it. It seems like they are just killing for killing's sake—creating fear to increase their power and control our people. (Former PULO commander, cited in HRW, 2007, p. 27)

A revered and well-respected mufti from Pattani province interviewed for this study made a largely similar point:

I don't understand the insurgents. They are killing fellow Muslims, women, and children. I don't understand what they are up to. Much of the conflict continues to be driven by resentment at the abuse and power of the [Thai] state. But you can't just rise up and hit anybody. Whoever the insurgents see first, they attack. They engage in violence for the sake of violence. (Author interview, Pattani, September 2006)

⁴¹ As one commentator put it,

the new generation is conspicuously using Islamist language to legitimate and fortify a nationalist insurgency, stressing that it is the moral obligation of all Malay Muslims to fight for the Pattani cause. (Author interview, Bangkok, July 2008)

⁴² Author interviews, Bangkok, September 2007 and July 2008. It should also be noted that the emphasis on creating an independent Pattani polity runs directly counter to Islamist credos and their rejection of the very notion of sovereign statehood.

Patterns of Recruitment and Radicalization

The basic pattern of recruitment in southern Thailand appears to focus on youths who display three key characteristics: piety, impressionability, and agility. These traits are valued because they are viewed as denoting individuals who will be easily swayed by parsimonious messaging techniques highlighting the virtues of the Malay Muslim struggle (both ethnonational and religious) but adept enough to quickly blend into local village or town life (the latter being critical, given the predominantly urban nature of the current insurgency). Those who seem receptive to liberationist theology are then invited to join prayer and discussion groups at mosques before being formally asked to join the struggle—usually at closed, small-group fringe meetings (ICG, 2005b, p. 26). HRW, which carried out an extensive survey of Malay youth inducted into militant ranks between March 2006 and July 2007, is arguably the most authoritative source of how this dynamic plays out. Illustrative of the experiences of many interviewed by the group is the following account given by Cha (not his real name), who joined a village-based BRN-K cell in 2003:

He [the *ustadz*] was very pleased to meet me. He said he has been watching me for some time because my friends—classmates and former students of my college—told him that I was a good Muslim and follow Islamic practice strictly. The *ustadz* told me that we must all have a stance on justice. He told me that our people [ethnic Malay Muslims] have been oppressed and abused by Thai officials for centuries. . . . He told me that every day our people are bullied, arrested, tortured and killed—even though they have not done anything wrong—by Thai officials, especially the police. Our generation has a duty to end this oppression. The *ustadz* always talked to me about these issues every time I met him. Later on, he invited me to visit his mosque and join the prayer. I met other *ponoh* students from my village, in addition to those coming from my college, and older people—those with a job, already married, and some had children. What we had in common was that we were all good Muslims—being pious—and we all respected the *ustadz*. We all came to listen to the *ustadz* and discuss the history of Patani Darulsalam and the political situa-

tion every Thursday and Friday night. Then one night he told me that he believed I could be a good fighter to protect and liberate our people from the oppression of the Thai state. I was told to swear allegiance to the struggle on the Koran, then eat a piece of paper bearing 24 vows written in Arabic script, washed down with holy water blessed by the *ustadz*. (Quoted with bracketed text in HRW, 2007, pp. 23–24)

Once recruited, youths undergo an intensive indoctrination program that is reportedly based on a religious training manual known as *Berjihad di Pattani*. Inductees are instructed to perform *zikir* (literally, recitations of the name of Allah)⁴³ and special prayers over a period of 40 days, which, they are taught, will make them impervious to knives and bullets as well as invisible to enemies. They are also told not to fear death but to actively welcome the opportunity to serve God's will in "all its dimensions"—including fighting as a *syahid* (martyr) warrior for the long-term good and benefit of the Malay nation.⁴⁴

Having been radicalized, cadres are gradually brought into the main line of militant actions. Typically, a strategy of systematic entrapment and brutalization is employed whereby individuals are instructed to undertake operations that are progressively more serious in nature. The objective is twofold: first, to inure inductees to greater acts of disobedience and violence and second, to slowly distance these individuals from mainstream civil society to the point that they have no real option but to remain with the militants.⁴⁵ In most cases, the procedure follows a standard pattern that starts out with the distribution of warning and propaganda leaflets, progresses through vandalism (such as burning telephone booths or destroying road signs) and the provision of logistical support for RKK strike teams (for example, by acting as lookouts or helping to block civilian escape routes) and culmi-

⁴³ According to some sources, new recruits are instructed to perform the *zikir* as many as 70,000 times a day for 40 days (see ICG, 2005b, p. 22).

⁴⁴ Author interviews, Pattani, September 2006, and Bangkok, September 2007; see also ICG, 2005b, p. 22.

⁴⁵ Author interviews, Bangkok and Pattani, September 2006, and Pattani, September 2007.

nates with direct involvement in actual terrorist attacks (HRW, 2007, pp. 24–25).

Thai security sources have expressed concern over the character and direction of these recruitment and radicalization patterns, not least because they appear to be making the conflict markedly more intractable and resilient than in the past.⁴⁶ In the words of one senior police official,

The Malay Muslim conflict today is stronger than it was [during the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s], particularly in the psychological sense. The militants believe that they can do anything and are more absolute in their approach; the emphasis is on violence and sowing terror, not on broaching any form of compromise or negotiation. (Author interview, Pattani, September 2006)

Traction Among the Local Population

In contrast to past manifestations of the southern Thai conflict, there does not appear to be any concerted effort by the current militant generation to win over the hearts and minds of the local population. Indeed, other than repeatedly highlighting the presumed threat posed to Malay Muslim culture by a foreign and repressive Thai Buddhist state, there has been little if any attempt by extremist entities to garner widespread civic support through on-the-ground political propaganda or messaging. By contrast, the emphasis has very much revolved around intimidating the population through threats and directed acts of violence. Certainly, there has been no attempt to isolate local Malays from the indiscriminate effects of bombings and shootings, with resultant casualties either blithely dismissed as simple collateral damage or weakly justified as the inevitable repercussion for failing to adhere to a “true” Islamic path.⁴⁷

Critically, the army and police have largely failed to offset these coercive tactics by providing an adequate security environment on the

⁴⁶ Similar sentiments were expressed to the author by Western officials during interviews in Bangkok, September 2007.

⁴⁷ Author interviews, Pattani, September 2006, and Bangkok and Pattani, September 2007 and April 2008.

ground. This has inevitably created a situation whereby the local populace neither trusts the security forces nor believes it has any other choice but to comply with rebel orders and assist in their logistical and operational efforts.⁴⁸ As one Pattani-based Muslim scholar observed,

For the insurgents, there is no real need to win over the population, as the people tend to lack trust in the security forces and, thus, gravitate toward them by default. In other words, their propaganda strategy mostly takes the form of capitalizing on the mistakes of the authorities. (Author interview, Pattani, September 2007)

Although clearly motivated by fear, the majority of Malays living in the border provinces have yet to be cowed into demanding outright independence. While a palpable resentment over Bangkok's general mismanagement of the deep south certainly exists, separatist militants have not been able to effectively translate this to their advantage, precisely because their strategy has tended to rely on brutality and base scaremongering. Perhaps the best indication of this is that overt symbols of the Thai polity (such as the national flag and posters of the royal family) not only remain very much in evidence but are also largely accepted, while graffiti calling for a "free Patani" is noticeably absent.⁴⁹ As one Western official observed, these are not the signs that one would normally associate with a seething hotbed of regional secessionist sentiment.⁵⁰

External Dimensions

At the time of this writing, there did not appear to be any concerted external dimension to the conflict in southern Thailand beyond the provision of limited safe-haven sites in Kelantan afforded by the porosity of the frontier with Malaysia. However, even here, stepped-up border cooperation with Kuala Lumpur—which has been largely consistent

⁴⁸ Author interviews, Bangkok and Pattani, September 2007.

⁴⁹ Author observations during field research, Pattani and Yala, September 2006 and 2007.

⁵⁰ Author interview, Bangkok, September 2006.

since the late 1990s⁵¹—has mitigated available opportunities for undetected movement, with most militant bases located in the hinterlands and jungles of Yala, Narathiwat, and Pattani themselves.⁵²

According to militant insiders interviewed by HRW, virtually all training is homegrown, overseen by veterans of the earlier PULO, New PULO, and BRN campaigns; “commandos” drawn from the current crop of rebels; and, reportedly, former RTA conscripts.⁵³ These same sources also attest that the bulk of their weaponry has been acquired via local theft and extortion rather than procured from outside arms markets and munition dumps and that funding is mostly derived from “mom-and-pop” teashops that the insurgents run themselves.⁵⁴

On a broader level, there is no sign that the Malay Muslim struggle is being exacerbated (much less driven) by the ideological input of outside extremists and demagogues. As noted previously, the conflict remains very much nationalistic in emphasis and, while the struggle has taken on more of a religious orientation in recent years, it is not apparent that this has altered underlying ethnocultural aims and objectives. Indeed, there appears to have been an explicit decision on the part of

⁵¹ At the time of this writing, Malaysia had confirmed that it would look into allegations that insurgents were crossing into Kelantan and would seriously consider future extradition requests from Thailand (author interviews, Bangkok, April 2008).

⁵² Author interviews, Bangkok, Pattani, and Yala, September 2007, and Bangkok, April 2008 and July 2008.

⁵³ HRW has documented several interviews with self-professed BRN-K members who adamantly stress that they have neither the need nor interest in employing foreigners to assist their tactical instructional and armament requirements. The following quote by one field commander questioned in November 2006 is typical of many of these assertions:

We are very capable of conducting good training by our own men. There is no need to get foreigners to help us in our struggle. [IEDs can be produced] by someone with the same level of knowledge of electronic circuits as those who can repair mobile telephones or digital watches. [And] we have enough local supply [of weapons] to fight for many years. (BRN-K field commander, quoted in HRW, 2007, pp. 25–26)

⁵⁴ Author interviews, Bangkok, July 2008; HRW, 2007, pp. 25–26. It should be noted that there have been some reports that weapons from Aceh, including rocket-propelled grenade launchers, have been smuggled into southern Thailand. At the time of this writing, however, no concrete evidence had emerged to vindicate these allegations.

militants *not* to associate with external, non-Malay entities, such as JI.⁵⁵ In the words of Mah (not his real name), a self-professed senior BRN-K operational commander,

We do not want to have anything to do with these guys [JI]; they are bad news. I told them we are only interested in looking after our own territory. . . . Many of our top *tok kuru* [headmasters of Islamic boarding schools] believe that if Indonesians become involved [in our struggle], we will be like Iraq—a place where Muslims kill Muslims. (Interview statement supplied to the authors, Pattani, September 2007)

Moreover, the overriding sense of self-identity that characterizes the southern border provinces strongly suggests that a built-in barrier to external penetration is firmly in place. Certainly, informed journalists, academics, and security officials are of the opinion that it would be extremely difficult for a foreign-based entity, like JI, to come to the region and introduce (much less entrench) its ideology, simply because the indigenous population would reject any sort of proselytism that emphasized that there was a “better” or purer form of Islam than the one already there. Just as importantly, the type of radical Salafist teachings that have been sourced to outside madrassas in such countries as Indonesia are at odds with the socioreligious outlook of Thailand’s Malay Muslims, which is Shafi-based and emphasizes the restoration of the past glory of the Patani Kingdom, not the regional supremacy of puritanical Islam.⁵⁶

Furthermore, although there has been a discernible spike in the scale and brutality perpetrated across Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat, there is nothing to link this change in tempo to the input of punitive, absolutist JI imperatives. By contrast, most informed observers believe that it merely reflects the disaggregated, cell-based nature of the contemporary struggle, which has served to obviate the organizational constraints on reckless individual action that characterized older, more

⁵⁵ Author interviews, Bangkok, April 2008 and July 2008.

⁵⁶ Author interviews, Pattani, September 2006, Bangkok and Pattani, September 2007, and Bangkok, July 2008.

hierarchical groups, such as PULO and New PULO.⁵⁷ These same sources also point out that marked violence—far from being propagated from outside—is an integral component of (current) extremist Malay strategy in at least three, interrelated respects: (1) to intimidate the local population (fear being one of the main tactics employed to control villagers), (2) to demonstrate that active rebel groups can act with impunity, and (3) to highlight the general weaknesses of the Thai state (to undermine public confidence in the security forces to protect them).

Perhaps the clearest reason to believe that the southern Thai conflict has not metamorphosed into a broader jihadist struggle, however, is that there has been neither a migration of violence north (much less to other parts of Southeast Asia) nor directed attacks against foreigners, tourist resorts (such as Phuket or Krabi, both of which are just a 6.5-hour drive away and serviced by a good road network) or overt symbols of American “cultural capitalism” (such as McDonald’s, Starbucks, or the Hard Rock Cafe). Indeed, there appears to have been a deliberate strategic decision on the part of militants to explicitly *not* tie the Malay cause to wider Islamic anti-Western/secular designs for fear that this will undermine the perceived credibility of their local commitment (and thereby threaten popular support) as well as prompt the international community to crack down on the insurgency as a manifestation of pan-regional jihadist extremism.⁵⁸

Assessment

There is little question that the scale and manifestation of violence in southern Thailand have taken on unprecedented dimensions since 2004. Roadside bombings, drive-by assassinations, and arson attacks occur on an almost-daily basis. Although there does not appear to be a concerted overarching strategic agenda guiding militant action, rebels have demonstrated a proven ability to carry out large-scale coordinated

⁵⁷ Author interviews, Pattani and Yala, September 2007.

⁵⁸ Author interviews, Bangkok, July 2008.

operations on a relatively consistent basis. More worryingly, the increasingly sectarian nature of the conflict is tearing at the social fabric of the region and could result in an upsurge of debilitating internecine communal warfare that substantially erodes the prospects for peaceful Muslim-Buddhist coexistence.

Despite the seriousness of the situation, there is currently little evidence to suggest that it is on the verge of morphing into mass conflict. Although the bulk of the local population is certainly resentful of the Thai presence, most people do not seem to want an independent state and largely reject the extreme and arbitrary nature of militant attacks.

There is also no indication (yet) that outside extremist ideologies are gaining traction in the south—either within the ranks of the rebels or among the population at large. The indigenous population jealously guards its own unique religious self-identity (and, thus, tends to be suspicious of outside demagogues), while militant entities, such as BRN-K, continue to conceive their objectives in explicitly local, parochial terms. Any move on the part of rebels to nationalize—much less internationalize—their struggle would, therefore, appear to be unlikely.

While there are no imminent indications that the localized nature of ongoing unrest in southern Thailand is about to change, there are two factors that could conceivably upset this dynamic. First would be the influx of a cadre of influential Malay religious radicals who had been “Talibanized” abroad and who manage to persuade a sufficient number of their brethren at home that the best way to reenergize the southern Thai struggle is to make it more relevant to the Muslim world by specifically linking the conflict to broader Islamist goals.⁵⁹ A precedent for such a transformation does exist in the guise of the ASG, which, after coming under the leadership of (the now deceased) Khaddafi Janjalani in 2004, progressively sought to cultivate its image as a bona fide jihadist organization committed to transborder imperatives (see Chapter Three).⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Author interviews, Bangkok, September 2007.

⁶⁰ Author interviews, Manila and Singapore, March–April 2005.

Second would be increased injections of U.S. foreign internal defense aid to the Thai government. If this assistance were used to step up RTA operations in the southern border provinces, it could well prompt Malay rebels to conceive their enemy in “far” as well as “near” terms. Such a cognitive shift would be especially likely to arise should another Krue Se-type incident take place under conditions of enhanced Thai-U.S. security collaboration.⁶¹ As one religious elder remarked during interviews in Pattani for this study,

There is a general awareness of issues currently going on in the Middle East and concern about U.S. policies in the region. However, these [actions] are not impacting on our unique way of life. But if any outside group [in this context, the United States] tried to come in and threaten our religion, we would rise up against them, naturally. (Author interview, Pattani, September 2006)

Apart from influencing Malay Muslim strategic calculations, developments of the sort discussed here would also be liable to resonate with external jihadist tactical designs because the potential scope of co-opting local militant support would be that much greater. It is unlikely that outside Islamists would pass up an opportunity of this sort. Indeed, Thailand’s free-wheeling capitalist economy and willingness to cater to Western decadence make it a logical target for jihadist aggression. Moreover, because there is not a sizable Muslim population outside the southern Malay provinces, far more functional latitude is available for carrying out large-scale assaults in greater Thailand without the attendant risk that they will affect wider Islamic interests (something that has negatively affected JI in Indonesia, as discussed in Chapter Five).⁶² If influential Malay insurgent leaders in the south were, in fact,

⁶¹ One scenario about which Western analysts remain somewhat concerned is the possibility of an outside cell establishing itself in the south (under its own auspices) and then carrying out a major terrorist attack under the guise of being part of the insurgency. This could have extremely serious repercussions in triggering a major (U.S.-supported) crackdown by the security forces that could, in turn, prompt a tactical, if not strategic, reorientation on the part of Malay insurgent forces (author interviews, Bangkok, July 2008).

⁶² There are already indications that foreign Muslim interest in the southern Thai conflict may be growing. In May 2008, a series of press statements focusing on the “Pattani Dar-

to acquiesce to outside pressure to nationalize the conflict, a sympathetic local population would provide transregional terrorists with an ideal base for carrying out “justifiable” acts of indiscriminate civilian violence and open up opportunities to turn the border provinces into a new operational hub for terrorist activities in Southeast Asia.

ussalam” conflict began to appear on Indonesian blogs. Written by a group calling itself Khattab Media and written in the Malay language, the posts were signed by Abu Ubaidah Hafizahullah on behalf of Al-Qaeda Baigan Asia Tenggra, or al-Qaeda, Southeast Asia Division (see ICG, 2008c, p. 5, fn. 22).

Muslim and Communist Extremism in the Philippines

Militant Context

Of all the countries in Southeast Asia, the Philippines is arguably confronted by the most diverse mosaic of militant internal security challenges. Current threats range from a persistent communist insurgency to ethnoreligious separatism and Islamic extremism. Briefly addressing some of the main causal factors that have given rise to this domestic environment is important in setting the context for the contemporary manifestation of terrorism and extremism in the country.

Historically, much of the Philippines' internal violence has derived from Bangsamoro Muslim grievances in Mindanao. Although constitutionally part of the state, the region has never subscribed to the concept of an integrated Catholic Filipino polity, defining itself, by contrast, on the basis of a unique ethnoreligious identity. This sense of separation has been exacerbated by persistent attempts to forcibly assimilate Mindanao into the wider political framework, first by the Spanish, then by the United States, and finally by a Christian-dominated central administration in Manila. Such efforts became particularly marked under the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos, when an explicit state policy of transmigration was pursued in a blunt attempt to alter the demographic balance in the southern provinces. Not only was this regarded as a direct threat to traditional Moro culture and language, its execution effectively robbed the indigenous population of what it had perceived as immutable ancestral land rights. Local outrage was further exacerbated by the actions of Christian vigilantes who were implicated in numerous atrocities directed against local Muslims—

often carried out at the direct behest of the security forces. Combined with economic neglect and crushing poverty—which, in many ways, continue to afflict the region today—these factors ingrained a sense of oppression and victimization that eventually gave rise to the outbreak of armed conflict in 1972.¹

Initially, the main vehicle for pursuing the Moro struggle was the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). Established by Nur Misuari, an ethnic Tausug and former University of the Philippines professor, the organization adopted an overtly nationalistic ideological agenda. Its stated goal was self-determination, which was enshrined as an essential precondition for the implementation of Islamic institutions in a future Bangsamoro republic. The MNLF subsequently engaged Manila in a protracted guerrilla war that was to last until 1996, when Misuari signed a peace deal with then-President Fidel Ramos. Informally referred to as the Davao Consensus, this provided for the creation of a limited Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) consisting of the four noncontiguous provinces of Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, Maguindanao, and Lanao del Sur, as well as the city of Marawi.² In addition, the agreement called for the creation of a wider Special Peace and Development Council (SPDC) that was to be responsible for implementing and overseeing infrastructure development in all 14 provinces of Mindanao. The MNLF was accorded governance of ARMM, while Misuari assumed chairship of the SPDC.³

The hope emanating from the 1996 accord was that by promoting the dual tracks of political autonomy and economic development, the relationship between the government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the MNLF (and the Moro Muslims it claimed to represent) would be redefined. However, the underlying conditions that led to the

¹ For further details on the roots of the Moro Muslim insurgency in Mindanao, see Turner, May, and Turner, 1992; George, 1980; ICG, 2004b, pp. 3–5; Abu Zahir, 1998; Islam, 1998; Martin and Tuminez, 2007; and Jubair, 2007, Chapter 1.

² ARMM was extended in 2001 to include Basilan (other than the capital, Isabela City), and, as a result of the partition of Maguindanao in 2007, a sixth province was added, Shariff Kabunsuan (see ICG, 2008b, p. 3, fn. 5).

³ For an overview of the accord, see Chalk, 1997.

outbreak of the insurgency remained. Manila's persistent interference in the running of ARMM denuded the arrangement of any credible claim to self-rule, and corruption and fiscal mismanagement at the hands of both the MNLF and the central government ensured that the SPDC failed to bring about any meaningful improvement in the day-to-day lives of ordinary Muslims.⁴

While the MNLF continues to adhere to the terms and conditions set out by the Davao Consensus, the group as a whole insists that Manila has failed to live up to the terms of the agreement. Two competing blocs have since emerged, each of which seeks the full implementation of the 1996 accord but via different tactical approaches: officially recognized MNLF, which is represented at various levels in the administration and pursues its aims within the legitimate sphere of the Philippine political process, and a dissident faction, generally referred to as the MBG, that has once again taken up arms against the government in an attempt to violently secure its objectives.⁵

Besides the MBG, two other prominent Moro militant groups continue to operate in Mindanao. The first is MILF, which from the outset rejected the Davao Consensus as wholly insufficient for meeting the aspirations of the Bangsamoro people. Since 1997, the group has represented the main radical Muslim challenge in the southern Philippines, though it has been prepared to engage in negotiations with Manila to reach what it considers to be a just and satisfactory peace deal. The second is the ASG, which rejects any formula (at least rhetorically) that does not envision the creation of a religiously pure theocratic state of Islamic Mindanao. The goals of this latter organization have fluctuated over time, however, variously switching between base criminal and more purist Islamist intent.⁶

⁴ Author interviews, Cotabato City, August 2005; see also Rasul, 2007. In the 2005 ARMM election, for instance, the Philippine government engineered the replacement of sitting governor Parouk Hussin with Datu Zaldy Ampatuan, the son of Maguindanao governor Datu Andal Ampatuan, a powerful local figure and ally of President Arroyo.

⁵ Author interviews, Cotabato City and Manila, January 2008.

⁶ It should be noted that in addition to the MBG, MILF, and ASG, the Rajah Solaiman Islamic Movement (RSIM) has also been linked to periodic terrorist incidents in Mindanao. The organization is composed of Christian converts (or "reverts" as they prefer to call them-

Besides the conflict in Mindanao, Manila is confronted by a persistent communist-terrorist insurgency, the origins of which date back to 1968, when the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) announced its adherence to the Maoist precept of “people’s war.” The CPP’s ensuing campaign of violence, which was executed through a dedicated military wing, the NPA, drew sustenance from profound social inequities (particularly in the countryside), economic stagnation, poor governance, and the political opportunity afforded by popular resentment of President Ferdinand Marcos’s declaration of martial law in 1972 (see Marks, 1996, pp. 85–96).

The CPP, together with its political arm, the National Democratic Front (NDF), and the NPA, expanded substantially during the 1980s, reaching a peak strength of about 25,000. In 1992, however, the momentum of the communist insurgency suffered as a result of a split between those who insisted on the continued relevance of Maoist rural guerrilla war and those who advocated a more explicit reorientation to urban-based operations. The ensuing internal struggle, which pitted longtime CPP secretary general Jose Maria Sison (an ardent supporter of Maoist principles) against so-called “insurrectionist-line” cadres, led to a purge of armed communist cells and the effective collapse of their wider supporting political infrastructure.⁷ The CPP has never fully recovered from this episode and certainly does not represent

selves) to Islam and allegedly acts as the militant arm of the far larger (and legal) Balik Islam movement. RSIM’s reputed aim is to establish a theocratic Muslim state across the entire Philippine archipelago to rectify what it regards as the artificial influx of Catholic influences brought first by the Spanish and later consolidated by the United States. Between 2002 and 2005, security analysts believed that the group provided logistical support for the ASG, facilitating several of the latter’s operations and plans. However, as of this writing, RSIM had been largely decimated, suffering both the loss of its leader (Ahmed Santos, who was arrested and charged with rebellion in November 2005) and a lack of funds. According to officials in Manila, the organization currently has only 17–25 members and is no longer considered a threat to national security (author interviews, Manila, January 2008).

⁷ Sison and the orthodox Maoist faction preferred a strategy of encircling the cities from the countryside, while the opposing faction favored a combination of rural and urban struggle, modeled on the Sandinista strategy in Nicaragua. The affidavits of the widows of two dissident former CPP leaders, Rolly Kintanar and Arturo Tabara, accusing Sison of the murder of their husbands over policy differences going back to the 1992 split, shed light on the intra-CPP controversy (see Abaya, 2006).

the threat it did in the 1980s. That said, its armed wing, the NPA, can still count on a core of at least 5,000 members and retains an ability to operate on a national scale.⁸

Militant Groupings

Moro Islamic Liberation Front

Background and Objectives. MILF was founded in 1984, emerging from a 1977 rift with the MNLF. The organization's original objective was the creation of an independent Islamic state—to be governed by sharia law—in all areas of the southern Philippines where Muslims have traditionally been in the majority (Chalk, 2002, p. 21).⁹ In a statement attributed to MILF chairman Hashim Salamat in 1996, this was set forth as both a central and nonnegotiable goal:

Autonomy will not work. . . . It will only be manipulated and controlled by the Manila government. . . . Only the full independence of the Bangsamoro people with an Islamic state will solve the problems of Mindanao. (Quoted in "Commissar of the Faith," 1996)

The underlying difference between the MNLF and MILF thus originally lay in ideology: Whereas the former was geared toward largely nationalist goals, the latter championed aspirations of a far more religious nature. In addition, the ethnogeographic concentration of the two groups has always been different. The MNLF has traditionally been stronger in the Tausug areas of the Sulu archipelago. MILF, on the other hand, is dominated by the Maguindanao and, to a lesser extent, the Maranao who predominate in the provinces of Maguindanao, Sultan Kudarat, and Cotabato.

⁸ Author interviews, Manila, January 2008.

⁹ Most of the southern Philippines is now Christian-dominated, reflecting the vigorous transmigration programs that have been explicitly pursued by Manila; indeed, by 1983, it was estimated that as much as 80 percent of the island's population was non-Islamic. It is for this reason that MILF concentrated its focus in areas where Moro Muslims were traditionally (as opposed to currently) in the majority.

danao and Lanao del Sur (though more recently, they have also managed to gain a residual foothold in Sulu).¹⁰

Although the original MILF program emphasized the creation of an independent state, the group has been prepared to negotiate on full secession if a genuine degree of autonomy is granted to Mindanao. In addition, it has progressively played down the Islamization aspect of its agenda and now places far greater stock in securing the political and economic interests of the Moros.¹¹ This more accommodating stance came clearly into focus in January 2003, when Salamat wrote to President George W. Bush and praised the United States as a “great champion of freedom and democracy,” reaffirmed MILF’s commitment to a negotiated settlement to the conflict in Mindanao, and explicitly endorsed a role for Washington to assist in this process (Jubair, 2007, pp. 205–209). Salamat followed this written correspondence with a letter four months later in which he fully renounced the use of terrorism—a conciliatory gesture that Bush acknowledged in his address to a joint session of the Philippine Congress in October 2003 (“Remarks by President Bush to the Philippine Congress,” 2003).

This trajectory was continued by Salamat’s successor,¹² the pragmatic and politically astute Al Haj Murad Ebrahim. Appreciating that a guarantee of comprehensive self-rule was probably the most that could be extracted from Manila, he committed to a mutual cessation of hostilities agreement in 2003 (monitored by a 59-strong Malaysian-led international monitoring team)¹³ and vowed to crack down on renegade commanders who either violated the truce or otherwise engaged in actions that contravened its terms; he has since actively participated

¹⁰ Author interviews, Cotabato City, January 2008. According to one MILF representative, the Sulu presence grew “organically” as a result of the decision to organize a MILF base command in the province.

¹¹ Author interviews, Cotabato City, January 2008.

¹² Salamat died of natural causes in 2003.

¹³ The substance of the truce is based on the Agreement on the General Framework for the Resumption of Peace Talks, which was signed in Kuala Lumpur on March 24, 2001, by Eduardo Ermita, the presidential adviser on the peace process, and Murad, then MILF’s vice chairman for military affairs.

in Malaysian-sponsored talks aimed at resolving a broad array of concerns pertaining to a future self-governing Moro homeland.¹⁴

At this writing, most of these issues had been worked out, with the two sides reaching agreement in November 2007 on a number of consensus points that would form the basis of the so-called Bangsamoro Judicial Entity, a final autonomous region for Muslims created and operating within the constitutional ambit of the Philippine state.¹⁵ Presently, the main outstanding issue concerns ancestral domain,¹⁶ which has direct implications for the size of the projected judicial entity.¹⁷ Although MILF and Manila established a common agreement for negotiating this specific question—signing the “Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain” (MoA-AD)—the Philippine supreme court issued an order preventing the Philippine government from signing the document on August 4, 2008, declaring it

¹⁴ For background on the evolution of these talks, see USIP, 2005, and ICG, 2004b.

¹⁵ Although remaining within the constitutional ambit of the Philippine state, it was agreed that the Bangsamoro Judicial Entity should be accorded substantial powers of self-rule, including the right to exercise full control over natural resources in areas under its jurisdiction; the right to establish its own civil-service and educational, economic, and financial systems; the right to maintain its own domestic security force; the right to police its internal and territorial waters; and the right to enter into trade agreements with foreign entities (see Quilop, 2008, p. 24).

¹⁶ It should be noted that, while ancestral domain is the main issue that still needs to be resolved, it is not the only one. The question of demobilization, for instance, has also been somewhat controversial. MILF has explicitly stated its interest in reinstituting the group's armed cadre as the basis of a future internal security force for the Bangsamoro Judicial Entity, whereas Manila continues to insist that all combatants should either be integrated into the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP)/Philippine National Police (PNP) or be returned to normal civilian life.

¹⁷ Manila has acknowledged that there is a Bangsamoro ancestral area in Mindanao and that the current geographic parameters of the MNLF ARMM constitute the nucleus of this domain. MILF, by contrast, insists that the Bangsamoro Judicial Entity should include not only ARMM but also the cities of Cotabato and Isabella on Basilan (both of which opted out of the 1996 agreement), six additional *barangays* in Lanao del Norte, the Muslim-majority areas of North Cotabato, and most of the province of Sultan Kudarat (author interviews, Zamboanga, January 2008; see also ICG, 2008b, p. 4; “Muslim Rebels Blame Arroyo Govt on Collapse of Peace Talks,” 2008; and “Filipino Peace Deal Hit by Bid to Delay Vote,” 2008).

fully unconstitutional two months later.¹⁸ Despite this setback, and resultant attacks by certain hard-line MILF base commands (discussed next), the two sides have continued to state their commitment to reaching an eventual peace settlement in some shape or form (Quilop, 2008, p. 26).

Structure and Size. MILF and its military arm, the Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces (BIAF), are hierarchical but not monolithic organizations that have established parallel political and military structures in the areas that they influence. The MILF executive arm is composed of a chairman and three vice chairmen for political, internal, and military affairs; a central committee; and a secretariat. Under this leadership arrangement, there are committees on youth affairs, education, information, intelligence, foreign affairs, *da'wa* (Islamic propagation), finance, and a panel responsible for the peace negotiations (Abuza, 2005b).

The military structure falls under the office of the vice chairman for military affairs and is composed of committees responsible for the northern, southern, eastern, western, and central fronts of MILF's armed forces. Combatants are organized into 14 base commands, each of which comes under the overall authority of BIAF chief of staff. The bulk of these fronts are located in central and eastern Mindanao, though the group also has an established territorial presence in Basilan, Sulu, and Zamboanga (see Table 3.1).¹⁹

The extent of the central leadership's control of base commanders is a matter of considerable debate. The AFP believes that, while Chairman Murad controls the majority of its military fronts, several field

¹⁸ The MoA-AD would have paved the way for a final peace agreement with MILF. The supreme court intervened to prevent its introduction after Catholic senators, hard-line hawks in the AFP, and powerful Christian families in Mindanao successfully lobbied against the MoA-AD on the grounds that it would effectively sanction the creation of a de facto Moro state within the Philippine Republic, which is incompatible with the country's existing constitution (Quilop, 2008, pp. 23–24; see also ICG, 2008b, p. 24; and "Filipino Peace Deal Hit by Bid to Delay Vote," 2008).

¹⁹ Author interviews, Manila and Zamboanga, January 2008. The larger commands have more than 1,000 members on average; the smaller ones have fewer than 400.

Table 3.1
MILF Base Commands

Base Command	Location	Est. Number of Members
102	Lanao del Sur	1,547
103	Maguindanao	1,536
101	Maguindanao	1,138
113	Zamboanga del Norte	1,121
105	Cotabato	586
114	Basilan	254
106	Sultan Kudarat	211
104	Sarangani	359
107	South Cotabato	1,028
108	Cotabato	514
112	Davao del Sur	260
109	Bukindon	379
110	Bukindon	357
111	Agusa del Sur	306

SOURCE: AFP intelligence briefing, Camp Aguinaldo, Manila, January 2008.

NOTE: These numbers do not include the roughly 480 individuals who make up the National Guard Division (which represents the core of Salamat loyalists) or part-time MILF fighters—hence the discrepancy between the table's total (9,596) and the AFP's 2007 estimate (11,679).

commanders—notably, those heading the 102nd (Abdulrahman Macapaa, aka Commander Bravo), 103rd (Aleem Suliaman), and 105th (Umbra Kato)—reject the current peace process with Manila and will not abide by any accord that the central executive might eventually sign. These leaders were the main instigators of renewed fighting that broke out following the supreme court's move to prevent the Philippine government from signing the MoA-AD in October 2003.²⁰ The

²⁰ Author interview, Manila, January 2008. The attacks were directed against several Christian villages in Lanao del Norte, resulting in the internal displacement of more than 129,000

MILF leadership, for its part, denies that there are any significant rifts in its military structure, insisting that, although some base commanders are clearly frustrated with the slow pace of negotiations, they will be forced to respect a final settlement once it is reached. In the words of one commander, rogue elements, such as the 105th are like “dogs on a leash. They are willing to go back to war, but they know that they will be isolated if they do not support the peace process.”²¹

In terms of numbers, MILF is estimated to have an armed strength of between 11,000 and 15,000 fighters, depending on the source cited. The AFP estimate in 2007 was 11,679 combatants equipped with an armory of some 7,700 weapons.²² The larger MILF base commands are believed to have a strength of between 800 and 1,500 individuals equipped with M1 Garand, M16, and M14 rifles; M203 grenade launchers; land mines; locally manufactured M79 RPGs; .50- and .60-caliber machine guns; and antitank munitions. In addition, there are various arms stockpiles under central MILF control that can be released in times of war.²³

MILF tactics have mostly taken the form of classic guerrilla warfare, emphasizing hit-and-run strikes and ambushes staged against police and army outposts. The group has generally not targeted non-combatants and civilians in indiscriminate attacks and, as noted, in 2003 declared an official moratorium on the use of terrorism in pursuit of its aims. That said, the AFP asserts that the organization retains a dedicated sabotage wing—known as the Special Operations Group and allegedly led by Akiddin Abdusalam (aka Commander Kiddie)—which it uses to carry out deniable urban bombings and random shootings whenever it believes that such actions will have “value” in refocusing national and regional attention on the Bangsamoro struggle (see, e.g., Schmitt, 2008). In addition, the military alleges that elements of

people. According to the AFP, the 102nd, 103rd, and 105th commands jointly carried out the assaults, systematically murdering civilians and burning their homes (Quilop, 2008, p. 23).

²¹ Author interview, Cotabato City, January 2008.

²² Author interviews, Manila, January 2008.

²³ Author interview, Cotabato City, January 2008.

MILF continue to work with the (explicitly terrorist) ASG in direct violation of the current peace process and are prepared to use IEDs against transportation companies as a means of extortion.²⁴

Patterns of Recruitment and Radicalization. Recruitment into MILF is based on the same sense of injustice that led to the formation of the MNLF in the 1970s. Although MILF does articulate an explicit Islamic-based ideology, the sources of Moro disaffection with Manila's rule are inherently political in nature, and the group readily appreciates the importance of appropriately responding to these grievances for recruitment purposes. Accordingly, reclaiming ancestral domain and addressing Muslim repression, poverty, marginalization, and social exclusion are central themes that have been consistently highlighted in MILF doctrinal efforts. In tandem with a traditional warrior culture, these rhetorical messages have been proven to be especially important in encouraging Moro youth to take up arms in the BIAF, with the Islamist obligation of jihad serving more as a broad religious rationale and justification for joining. As an added incentive, MILF routinely stresses material benefits to potential recruits, including offers of clothing, housing, employment, and upward mobility.²⁵

Attitude of the General Population. It is difficult to estimate with precision the level of popular support for MILF in Mindanao. Indigenous Moro loyalties are fractured among a number of political movements, such as the competing official and dissident MNLF factions, and frequently take the form of adherence to powerful local families. That said, the group's ability to develop a strongly rooted military and political infrastructure in western and central Mindanao that has withstood Manila's counterinsurgency (COIN) campaigns for more than 30 years would suggest a reasonably strong base of MILF following. Indeed, the organization was able to mobilize and bring an estimated 100,000 to its first open general assembly in Camp Darapanan in May

²⁴ Author interviews, Cotabato City and Zamboanga, January 2008. According to these officials, Kiddie, who is thought to be based somewhere in Zamboanga Sibugay, has been given the green light to engage in a full-scale terrorist campaign in the event that the GRP-MILF peace process is declared null and void.

²⁵ Author interview, Manila, January 2008.

2005. Moreover, according to political observers in the southern Philippines, MILF support has grown stronger since the signing of the 1996 Davao Consensus because the accord effectively left it as the only major Muslim movement contesting Manila's authority. These same sources additionally attest that the failure of the ARMM to meet Moro expectations for genuine autonomy and effective governance has vindicated MILF's stance and further boosted the group's credibility in Mindanao.

Evidence of Cross-Border Links. It is now known that for much of its earlier inception, MILF was prepared to work with JI, allowing the latter movement to establish a dedicated training and logistical outpost (Wakalah Hudaibiyah) at its main headquarters, Camp Abu Bakar (ICG, 2004b, p. 13; ICG, 2008b, p. 3; Abuza, 2004).²⁶ Developments since 2004, however, suggest that MILF has stopped providing refuge to JI. The mainstream of the group has conspicuously moved to distance itself from any association with the Indonesia-based network, recognizing that, in the context of peace talks with Manila, any indication of attachment with JI would be entirely counterproductive. Indeed, according to Ghazali Jaafar, MILF vice chairman for political affairs, "JI is very much a concern of the MILF now because it is hurting the interests of the Bangsamoro people. It is a problem today and will be a problem in the future" (quoted in Abuza, 2004, p. 19).

Moreover, certain commentators have suggested that MILF's past connections with JI were a product of the group's Islamist orientation under Salamat (Abuza, 2004, pp. 14–20). While it is certainly debatable whether this predisposition necessarily translated to a common affinity for pan-regional jihadism, it would appear that the current MILF leader has no such interest. As noted earlier, since assuming the mantle of chairman in 2003, Al Haj Murad has pursued a highly pragmatic approach to the Moro struggle, focusing more or less exclusively

²⁶ Access to Hudaibiyah was retained until the AFP overran Abu Bakar in July 2000, after which JI was forced to move further into Maguindanao where a new training facility was established—Jabal Quba on Mount Cararao (an alternative MILF headquarters, the Buliok Complex, was captured by the AFP in 2003).

on securing local economic and political imperatives (rather than pursuing a cross-border religious agenda).²⁷

The one complicating factor in this portrayal of MILF is the attitude of the lost commands. According to Philippine and Western officials, elements associated with certain renegade commands not only forcibly reject Murad's current leadership posture (and the willingness to negotiate for autonomy), they also claim to interpret the conflict in Mindanao as part of a wider pan-Islamist campaign against secularism, modernity, capitalism, and the influx of Western values into Southeast Asia.²⁸ More seriously, there have been assertions that prominent JI members benefit from haven in Salipada K. Pendatun (SKP), a remote MILF camp located in the Liguasan Marsh region where purported rebel commands converge (ICG, 2008b, p. 5).²⁹ What remains unclear, however, is the influence that these factions retain and the extent to which they are actively (as opposed to rhetorically) seeking to integrate their own agendas with that of JI. At the time of this writing, the evidence was that ties were as much pragmatic and logistical as defined in ideological terms.

Links to Other Groups. Philippine military sources strongly suspect that MILF, or at least elements within the movement, retain operational and logistical links with the ASG and MBG, despite the leadership's stated commitment to curtail all contact with active dissident groups as part of the ongoing peace process with the GRP. Senior AFP officials claim that, while these ties probably reflect more a marginal than integral feature of MILF's activities, they have embraced—to varying degrees—a full spectrum of support that has incorporated everything from training and haven (provided at SKP, as mentioned

²⁷ Author interviews, Manila, March 2006.

²⁸ Author interviews, Manila, March 2006. Similar comments were made during the Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies and Institute for Defence and Strategic Studies conference Security Cooperation and Governance in Southeast Asia: Responding to Terrorism, Insurgency, and Separatist Violence in Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines, held in Singapore, September 26–28, 2006.

²⁹ The SKP commander is Mugasid Delna (aka Abu Badrin), a former classmate of Umar Patek in Afghanistan and who Philippine intelligence officials believe to be a major link between renegade MILF fronts and foreign jihadis.

previously) to arms, personnel, and joint operations.³⁰ MILF's willingness to work with the ASG is seen partly as a consequence of residual blood, clan, and tribal bonds between Moro organizations in the south as well as the continued salience of so-called *pintakasi* (literally, a fight that everyone joins) principles that dictate reciprocal obligations of communal assistance whenever a group is engaged by the military.³¹ In May 2008, for instance, renegade Special Operations Group members were tied to the bombing of Edwin Andrews Air Force Base in the city of Zamboanga, which army sources believe was a diversionary attack carried out in conjunction with the ASG to divert military attention from the Sulu archipelago (the last bastion of strength for the latter organization) (Pareño, Romero, and Mananghaya, 2008; Schmitt, 2008).³²

MILF also evidently cooperates with the NPA. According to a MILF senior spokesman, this is necessary to deconflict areas where the two forces have a contiguous presence, such as in Davao, central Mindanao, and north Cotabato. In other words, agreements are primarily aimed at peaceful coexistence and delineating recognized jurisdictional zones rather than extending to logistical and operational support, as is the case with the ASG and MBG.³³

Misuari Breakaway Group

Background and Objectives. The MBG emerged in 2002 following the arrest of Nur Misuari on charges that he incited a rebellion in Jolo and Zamboanga City in November 2001 to forestall the election

³⁰ Author interviews, Zamboanga, January 2008; see also ICG, 2008b, p. 5. Among the ASG leaders who are alleged to have been accommodated at the SKP are Khaddafi Janjalani, Abu Soliaman, and Isnilon Hapilon. These individuals are discussed in the ASG section of this chapter.

³¹ Author interviews, Zamboanga, January 2008.

³² The attack killed two, injured 22 others, and forced the diversion of a plane carrying President Arroyo and U.S. Ambassador Kristie Kenney, who were supposed to make a brief stop at the air base while en route to Tawi-Tawi.

³³ Author interview, January 2008.

of a Manila-backed MNLF rival as ARMM governor.³⁴ The group is composed primarily of MNLF dissidents who, as noted, demanded the full implementation of the 1996 Davao Consensus, the terms of which they claim have been systematically diluted by the implementation legislation that has since been passed by the Philippine Congress. The MBG is currently thought to exist as a tripartite arrangement that links three main factions led by commanders Sasiyal, Khaid Ajibon, and Habier Malik, with the bulk of forces concentrated under the leadership of Malik.³⁵

Structure and Size. It is difficult to gauge the structure and size of the MBG. The AFP estimates that armed pro-Misuari partisans probably number around 660, down from 3,200 at the time of the Zamboanga rebellion. As noted, most of these cadres are thought to be under the control of Commander Malik, who is based in Sulu. There is no publicly available data on how many weapons the MBG has access to; however, clashes with the AFP suggest that the group is able to call on a reasonably well-stocked armory—much of which is probably sourced from MNLF munitions caches that were never properly decommissioned following the signing of the 1996 Davao Consensus.³⁶

Patterns of Recruitment and Radicalization. Members of the MBG are not, strictly speaking, “inducted” into the group. In most cases, they have either remained loyal to Misuari since his arrest or have become disillusioned with the officially recognized MNLF leadership and its current handling of the peace process with Manila. According to sources in Mindanao, Commander Malik has also emerged as something of a magnet for MBG recruitment, with increasing numbers of mainstream activists now seemingly prepared to endorse him as the most likely successor to Misuari.³⁷ In addition to these factors and in common with other organizations throughout the Moro region, MBG

³⁴ Misuari initially fled to Sabah following the rebellion, only to be detained by Malaysia and handed over to Philippine authorities. He was initially jailed before being placed under house arrest in 2006 and was eventually freed in May 2008 (see Robles, 2008).

³⁵ Author interviews, Manila and Zamboanga, January 2008.

³⁶ Author interviews, Manila, January 2008.

³⁷ Author interviews, Manila and Cotabato City, January 2008.

attachment reflects and frequently tends to be based on ethnic, clan, or family ties.

Attitude of the General Population. Support for the MBG among the Moro population is, again, difficult to gauge. According to some Moro sources, Misuari is a charismatic leader who held considerable sway over the indigenous population in Mindanao but has lost much of this backing because of the mismanagement and corruption that afflicted ARMM during his tenure as governor. However, other Moro activists assert that Misuari continues to enjoy widespread popularity, and quite possibly more than the official leadership—not least because the latter is perceived as subservient to the central government in Manila.³⁸ According to various Moro civic leaders and observers with strong MNLF ties, Misuari retains a great deal of backing and respect not only in the movement's stronghold of Sulu but also in Davao, Lanao, Maguindanao, and the Zamboanga peninsula.³⁹

Evidence of Cross-Border Links. The MNLF has a tradition of international activism and, for historic reasons, the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) recognizes the group as the sole legitimate representative of the Moro people. In the early stages of its armed struggle in the 1970s, the MNLF received funding, military training, and weapons from radical states in the Middle East, primarily Libya, as well as support from the governing party of the Malaysian state of Sabah (Chalk, 1997, p. 82; "Qadhafi Aids NPA, MNLF," 1987; "Moros—A Philippine Powder Keg," 1986). However, this type of assistance ceased even before the signing of the 1996 agreement, and there is no evidence that the MBG has been able to reinstitute any equivalent type of regional or global network to underwrite its activities.⁴⁰

Links to Other Groups. There are increasing reports that the MBG has moved to forge logistical and operational links with the ASG, the impetus for which is generally believed to lie with the Malik faction in Sulu. According to AFP officials, ASG core members frequently move between central Mindanao and Jolo by way of Kalinggalang, a main

³⁸ Author interviews, Manila and Cotabato City, January 2008.

³⁹ Author interviews, Manila and Cotabato City, January 2008.

⁴⁰ Author interviews, Manila and Zamboanga, January 2008.

Malik area of control. Military sources also allege that his group has been prepared to offer combat support to help Abu Sayyaf militants repel security offensives and sweeps in Sulu. In common with MILF, MBG links with the ASG reflect common blood and clan and tribal ties, as well as recognition of the *pintakasi* obligations noted earlier.⁴¹ Concerns that the MBG and ASG might fully merge, however, are downplayed by MNLF and other Moro sources, which assert that cooperation between the two groups is strictly tactical, reflecting their fundamentally different motivating agendas. In the case of the MBG, the imperative is essentially driven by nationalism, while the ASG is more religiously or criminally oriented.⁴²

Abu Sayyaf Group

Background and Objectives. The ASG was founded on the Basilan island in 1991 under the leadership of *ustadz* Abdurajak Janjalani. Originally known as the Al Harakat-ul Al Islamiya, the group has stated as its goals the eradication of all Christian influence in the southern Philippines and the creation of an Islamic state of Mindanao whose “nature, meaning, emblem and objective are basic to peace.”⁴³

Although when Janjalani originally created his movement, it was predicated on the localized imperative of establishing an Islamic state of Mindanao, he quickly tied this objective to the regional and global supremacy of Islam through armed struggle. Toward that end, the ASG paralleled its anti-Christian agenda in Mindanao with an effort to establish logistical and operational links with external terrorist groups.⁴⁴ Concrete evidence of these transnational ambitions

⁴¹ Author interviews, Manila, January 2008.

⁴² Author interviews, Manila, January 2008.

⁴³ These objectives were first set forth in an undated ASG proclamation, the *Surah I-Al Fatihah*, which professed to refute the lies and false insults hurled at the Islamic religion by Christians and to liberate Mindanao from the clutches of oppression, tyranny, and injustice as experienced under the Catholic-dominated Philippine government and military. Despite these pronouncements, the ASG has never articulated a clear strategic plan for how it would actually establish a pure Islamic state in the southern Philippines or, indeed, prepare local Muslims for home rule (“Abu Sayyaf Group Profile,” 2006).

⁴⁴ Author interviews, Manila, March 2005.

first emerged in 1995, when five ASG cells were directly implicated in Oplan Bojinka, a multipronged plot aimed at assassinating the pope and President Bill Clinton, bombing Washington's embassies in Manila and Bangkok, and sabotaging U.S. commercial airliners flying trans-Pacific routes from U.S. West Coast cities. The plan was hatched by Ramzi Yousef, the convicted mastermind of the 1993 attack against the World Trade Center in New York, and was foiled only when volatile explosive compounds ignited a fire in the apartment that he was renting in Manila.⁴⁵

The fervor of the ASG's Islamist agenda—both domestic and international—began to atrophy in the wake of the discovery of Bojinka, a process that rapidly gathered pace three years later when Janjalani was killed in a shoot-out with Philippine police on Basilan island. This particular event proved to be a defining moment in the ASG's evolutionary history, triggering a leadership crisis that was followed by the loss of ideological direction and subsequent factionalization that saw the group degenerate into a loosely configured but highly ruthless kidnap-for-extortion syndicate (see, e.g., ICG, 2008b, p. 8, fn. 3).⁴⁶

The criminal disaggregation of the ASG proved to be short-lived, however. Beginning in 2003, concerted attempts were made to re-energize the group as an integrated and credible Islamist force. The bulk of these efforts were coordinated under the combined auspices of Khaddafi Janjalani (the younger brother of Abdurajak) and Jaina Antel Sali (aka Abu Solaiman), a self-proclaimed ASG spokesman, both of whom sought to return the group to its militant jihadist origins following the arrest and killings of several leading bandit commanders. Notably, these included Ghalib Andang (aka Commander Robot) and Aldam Tilao (aka Abu Sabaya), two domineering personalities who

⁴⁵ For more on Oplan Bonjinka, see Elegant, 2002; Spaeth, 2002; Struck et al., 2001; "Muslim Militants Threaten Ramos Vision of Summit Glory," 1996; and "The Man Who Wasn't There," 1995.

⁴⁶ A number of these kidnappings proved to be highly profitable. Abductions of several Western tourists in the first half of 2000, for instance, are believed to have netted the ASG an estimated \$20 million in ransom payments (see "No More Ransoms," 2001; Maydans, 2001; and Sheehan, 2000).

had orchestrated many of the earlier kidnap-for-extortion operations claimed in the group's name.⁴⁷ Although they are now dead, Khaddafi and Solaiman's influence has been significant in reorienting the tactical and strategic direction of the ASG.⁴⁸ The group, though disaggregated, now routinely refers to itself by its original nomenclature—Al Harakat-ul Al Islamyia—and has steadily scaled back its lucrative kidnap-for-extortion activities in favor of a more directed focus on attacking high-profile civilian and Western targets in major metropolitan areas. Some of the more notable attacks and plots attributed to the organization in recent years include the following:

- the 2004 firebombing of Philippine *SuperFerry 14*, a joint operation with JI that resulted in 116 deaths and remains the most destructive act of maritime terrorism to date
- a series of coordinated explosions that took place in Davao City, General Santos City, and Manila in February 2005 (the so-called “Valentine’s Day bombings”)
- preempted strikes on several venues that were popular with foreign tourists and businesspeople in Makati City that had been scheduled for March 2005
- the bombing of a bar on Jolo in March 2006
- the bombing of a crowded supermarket on Jolo, also in March 2006
- a series of motorcycle assassinations in August 2006 that left more than 70 dead
- coordinated explosions in three towns across central Mindanao (Makilala, Tacurong, and Cotabato City) in October 2006⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Andang was killed while trying to escape from jail in March 2005; Tilao was shot in an offshore gun battle in Mindanao in June 2001. The latter was behind the sensational abduction of 20 hostages from the resort island of Palawan in May 2001, including Americans Martin and Gracia Burnhams. For an interesting account of this episode and the events leading up to Tilao’s eventual death, see Bowden, 2007.

⁴⁸ Khaddafi died after sustaining serious injuries during a firefight with the AFP on September 4, 2006. Solaiman was killed by a special forces unit on January 16, 2007. Both had carried US\$5 million bounties (Abuza, 2007b, p. 13).

⁴⁹ These bombings came on the heels of the capture of Joko Pitono’s (aka Dulmatin’s) wife.

- planned simultaneous attacks on the sites hosting the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and East Asian regional summits in January 2007.

Arguably more importantly, the ASG has sought to consolidate ties with the pro-bombing bloc of JI—which currently represents the most significant and dangerous jihadist entity in Southeast Asia (see Chapter Five)—acting as the main vehicle for furthering its operational and logistical activities in Mindanao. Intelligence sources in the Philippines confirm that militants associated with the faction continue to pass through areas under ASG control and that at least three of the most wanted men in Southeast Asia are now based in Patikul under the group’s protection: Joko Pitono (aka Dulmatin), Umar Patek, and Zulkifi bin Hir (aka Marwan).⁵⁰

Structure and Size. The ASG’s current configuration is disaggregated. Following the deaths of Khaddafi Janjalani and Abu Soliaman, the group lost much of its internal cohesion and, critically, has yet to identify a new emir who is able to command broad support across the organization. Radullan Sahiron (aka Commander Putol) is the closest that the group has to such an individual. However, he is old (in his 70s) and suffers from acute diabetes. The other potential emir, Isnilon Totoni Hapilon (aka Salahuddin), is from the Yakan tribe, which is not acceptable to the Tausugs. According to Philippine military sources, recent nongovernmental organization (NGO) and media reports that a religious scholar named Yasir Igasan (aka Tuan Ya) had been elected as the new emir of the ASG are erroneous.⁵¹ While Igasan is said to have solid theological credentials and potentially useful connections over-

⁵⁰ Author interviews, Manila and Zamboanga, January 2008; see also ICG, 2008b, p. 9. These three individuals are considered especially dangerous in terms of IED construction, given their respective proficiencies: Zulkifi, military ordnance; Patek, chemicals; and Dulmatin, electronics. The threat from Dulmatin and Patek is deemed to be particularly serious, and they respectively carry US\$10 million and US\$1 million bounties (Rewards for Justice, undated).

⁵¹ The ICG claimed in its most recent report on the Philippines, for instance, that Igasan had taken up the mantle as the ASG spiritual leader: “[I]t is [Igasan’s] education at the Islamic University of Medina in Saudi Arabia that makes him one of the most qualified religious authority figures in Sulu” (ICG, 2008b, p. 8).

seas, he lacks military experience and consequently is not viewed as a viable mujahidin leader.⁵²

According to AFP sources, as of the beginning of 2008, the ASG comprised fewer than 100 hard-core militants in addition to 200–300 active followers. The PNP similarly estimates the group's overall strength at around 400.⁵³ Other approximations of ASG numbers are lower. One MNLF source with deep connections in Sulu claims that the organization probably has no more than 20 operational members, an assessment shared by at least one Western security official.⁵⁴ In trying to determine the ASG's strength, however, a strict focus on numbers may be deceptive. Recruitment into and support of the group is fluid and based largely on family and clan relationships, meaning that its size is likely to fluctuate widely depending on the circumstances. Typically, when government security sweeps become too intense, the ASG will seek to disperse and blend in with the local population, regrouping only when the pressure lets up.⁵⁵ In other words, the group's strength in numbers at any one time is relative rather than absolute and may be more a function of its ability to lay low in the surrounding community than the result of the intensity of the extant AFP CT effort.

ASG core members are based mostly in Zamboanga and outlying islands in the Sulu archipelago (particularly Jolo and Tawi-Tawi) and move between strongholds in small speedboats powered by 250- to 300-horsepower engines that are too fast to be intercepted by the Philippine navy. The ASG is also thought to have support and logistical networks in central Mindanao, Davao, and Manila. The PNP believes that this presence has been vital in allowing the organization to extend its operational footprint beyond a purely local setting and that nascent infrastructure in the capital was instrumental in facilitating the 2005

⁵² Author interviews, Zamboanga, January 2008.

⁵³ Author interviews, Manila, January 2008.

⁵⁴ Author interviews, Manila, January 2008.

⁵⁵ Author interviews, Manila and Zamboanga, January 2008.

Valentine's Day bombings as well as the November 2007 assassination of Philippine congressional representative Wahab Akbar.⁵⁶

Patterns of Recruitment and Radicalization. Although of growing importance to its current configuration, ideology has generally not been a critical factor in recruitment into the ASG. Support for the group is driven largely by family and clan relationships and reinforced by a strong tradition of resistance to outside authority. The Sulu archipelago, the heart of current ASG popular backing, was the site of an independent sultanate that resisted Spanish domination from the 16th to the 19th centuries. Natives from the island proudly maintain that their ancestors never "surrendered" to Manila, and this stalwart attitude is one that the ASG has conspicuously leveraged to underscore both the legitimacy and, more importantly, the credibility of its struggle.⁵⁷

The group has also portrayed itself as a modern-day "Robin Hood" outfit that looks after the economically aggrieved. Together with the lure of a "quick buck," this self-proclaimed identity has been leveraged to lure in impressionable adolescents, farmers suffering from failed crops, the urban unemployed, and otherwise marginalized or impoverished sectors of society. Messaging of this sort has helped offset some of the recent losses that the ASG has suffered at the hands of the AFP (see Chapter Seven), providing the group with a residual (if weakened) base that remains sufficiently strong to not only generate fear and attract media attention but also inflict meaningful physical damage.⁵⁸

Attitude of the General Population. The ASG has traditionally retained a fair degree of support in Sulu, despite its brutal tactics,

⁵⁶ Author interviews, Manila, January 2008. Wahab Akbar was a former MNLF leader suspected of having links to various ASG militants but who later turned against the group and contributed to government CT efforts against it. While the ASG has yet to claim responsibility for the assassination (and, at the time of this writing, there had been no arrests in connection with the crime), PNP intelligence officials speculate that the group had some role in the killing. One widely held theory was that contracted ASG assassins executed the operation while moonlighting for a political rival of Akbar. For more on this interpretation, see dela Cruz and Papa, 2007, and Jacinto, 2007.

⁵⁷ Author interview, Manila, January 2008.

⁵⁸ Author interviews, Zamboanga, January 2008.

largely because it is viewed as standing up to a central government in Manila that is considered alien, oppressive, and hostile to Islam, as discussed earlier.⁵⁹ Past heavy-handed COIN measures have exacerbated these perceptions, with one senior AFP intelligence official acknowledging that, for many years, “the people of Jolo hated the military” on account of its repeated use of large-scale, indiscriminate bombings: “The Army’s concept was bombing. When the ASG came in, the civilians got caught in the middle, [but] if you killed one civilian, the whole *barangay* [barrio] will hate you.”⁶⁰

Recently, however, there does appear to have been a diminution in ASG’s overall level popularity among local Moros (including in Sulu), reflecting the institution of more nuanced and “softer” civil-military operations (CMOs). As the AFP official observes: “[Now,] everybody [all of the military services] is doing community work. [Provision of] education, health, and water is [recognized as] the basic solution to the problem.”⁶¹

Levels of support for the ASG, therefore, appear to be inversely proportional to the security forces’ reliance on military means to uproot the organization. Hard countermeasures tend to correlate with increased extremist sympathy and support. Conversely, CMOs and community engagement seem to generate more favorable public attitudes and sentiments. According to the AFP, this is currently being borne out by the heightened willingness on the part of locals to provide intelligence and report on terrorist movements and activities.⁶²

Evidence of Cross-Border Links. As noted earlier, the ASG, at least in its early phase, defined its ideological purpose as one that was intimately bound to a broader agenda aimed at ensuring the supremacy of the Muslim faith through armed struggle. As part of this objective, the organization moved to institute both logistical and operational

⁵⁹ As noted here, there are also pragmatic, self-interested reasons for supporting the ASG. Apart from the prospect of money, the group can provide protection in the event of clan wars and is able to command obedience through coercion and intimidation.

⁶⁰ Author interview, Manila, January 2008.

⁶¹ Author interview, Manila, January 2008.

⁶² Author interviews, Manila, January 2008.

ties with global terrorist entities and came to play a prominent role in Oplan Bojinka. Although the overall scope of these external links atrophied following the death of Janjalani in 1998 and subsequent criminal degeneration of the group, moves have been made to reestablish contact with outside Islamist entities as part of ASG's so-called "jihadist rebirth." In the current Philippine context, the main direction of these efforts has been toward JI, in the apparent hope that this would validate the group's religious credentials and thus elevate its appeal to a more expansive Southeast Asian militant Muslim community.⁶³ As the ICG has observed, it would now seem evident that a new generation of ASG militants is emerging in Mindanao who not only seek to wreak havoc against the Philippine state, but, emboldened by their interaction with JI, are once again emphasizing the Salafi jihadist tradition of *ahl al-thughoor*: warriors defending the periphery of the Muslim world and fighting to reclaim territories (local and extraregional) lost to Islam (ICG, 2005c, p. 21; see also Roy, 2004, pp. 53, 112, and 312; and Bubalo and Fealy, 2005, p. 115). AFP sources similarly talk about the growing fanaticism of ASG, stressing that, while the group has been subjected to debilitating CT sweeps, its residual threat quotient remains high simply by virtue of its continued association with prominent pro-bombing JI elements, such as Patek and Dulmatin.⁶⁴

Links with Other Groups. As noted previously, the ASG is widely suspected of collaborating with both the MBG and renegade elements of MILF, reflecting ties that bear common blood and clan relationships as well as entrenched *pintakasi* obligations. Not only has this interaction provided the group with crucial operational and organizational latitude, it has also blurred and substantially complicated the parameters of the contemporary militant picture in Mindanao. As one Western analyst put it, "There is no clear dichotomy of insurgent or terrorist threats in the southern Philippines. One can be a member of MILF in the morning, MBG in the afternoon, and ASG at night."⁶⁵

⁶³ Author interviews, Manila and Singapore, March–April 2005.

⁶⁴ Author interviews, Zamboanga, January 2008.

⁶⁵ Author interview, Manila, January 2008.

Communist Party of the Philippines–New People's Army

Background and Objectives. The CPP-NPA's stated objective is to replace the current economic and political order in the Philippines with a socialist system through a strategy of protracted people's war (see "Celebrate the 38th Anniversary of the People's Army!" undated, and "25 Years of the New People's Army," 1994). To accomplish its goals, the communist movement employs all tactical means at its disposal: military struggle, mass mobilization, political lobbying (including "buying" elected representatives, as well as actual participation in elections through its legitimate front, the NDF), and international solidarity work with other left-wing organizations. The CPP-NPA has also been prepared to engage in peace talks with the government, though it has currently suspended this particular track as a result of the NPA's designation as a foreign terrorist organization by the United States and the European Union (a move explicitly supported by Manila).⁶⁶

In recent years, the ideological clarity of the CPP-NPA has been clouded by its increased involvement in banditry. Mirroring the degeneration that occurred within the ASG following the death of Janjalani, several armed communist cells now effectively exist as full-fledged kidnapping and crime syndicates. The Red Scorpion Group, for instance, which has been involved in several abductions and bank robberies, is made up of former NPA guerrillas. Similarly, the notorious P50-Million Gang, named after the ransom that it typically demands for the release of its hostages, is known to have an ex-NPA commander on its ruling council (Coronel, 2003).

Structure and Size. The CPP and NPA are both structured, hierarchical organizations. At the local level, barrio revolutionary committees are charged with implementing land reform, organizing the people's militia and popular courts, and collecting taxes. These committees oversee subordinate administrative bodies on organization, education, the economy, defense, and health. This arrangement is consistent with general communist revolutionary theory, which contemplates the forced removal of the entire state apparatus and its replacement with

⁶⁶ Author interviews, Manila, January 2008; see also Republic of the Philippines, Office of the Presidential Advisor on the Peace Process, 2007.

an alternative mass-based institutional structure (see, e.g., “With the New People’s Army in the Philippines,” 1998, and “Organize Barrio Defense Units,” 2006).

The CPP Politburo, through its military committee, is supposed to control the NPA.⁶⁷ In practice, however, the armed wing enjoys considerable autonomy due to the fragmented character of the Philippine archipelago and the considerable difficulty that this has engendered in terms of day-to-day communications.⁶⁸ The NPA itself is organized into 87 guerrilla fronts that are scattered across the country. Its main areas of strength are in Samar (the Visayas) and eastern Mindanao, though the group also has a sizable presence in parts of the Compostela and Surigao valleys, Davao Oriental, Davao del Norte, Misamis, and Zamboanga del Norte.⁶⁹

According to AFP estimates, the NPA could count on 5,760 active guerrillas by the end of 2007, down from 7,200 at the end of 2006 and a major decline from the 28,000 members at the peak of the group’s strength in the mid-1980s (see “Other Fights Distracting Army from War with Reds,” 2007). The military believes that the NPA has infiltrated at least 1,190 *barangays* (5 percent of the country’s total) and currently has access to some 5,694 firearms (a 6-percent drop since 2006).⁷⁰

Although declining in numbers, the CPP-NPA insurgency is currently deemed to constitute the number-one security threat in the Philippines. Military, police, and government officials universally agree that the challenge posed by communist militants outweighs that of Moro Muslim radicals, given that the former operates nationally, has effec-

⁶⁷ In theory, party control and discipline are enforced by the CPP political officer, who also determines the political objectives of all NPA military operations. After a mission is completed, after-action discussions take place. These are overseen by the political officer and designed to provide a forum in which individual members of the relevant guerrilla unit can assess the strengths and weaknesses of their performance (author interview, Manila, January 2008).

⁶⁸ Author interview, Manila, January 2008.

⁶⁹ Author interviews, Manila, January 2008.

⁷⁰ Author interviews, Manila, January 2008.

tively infiltrated a wide array of formal state institutions and structures (including schools, universities, labor organizations, churches, local businesses, and even the legislature), and defines its ideological rationale (at least in the long term) as the complete removal of the country's existing political architecture.⁷¹ Moreover, the NPA has repeatedly demonstrated an effective ability to carry out attacks against vital targets and critical infrastructure. Between January and May 2008, for example, communists bombed no fewer than 23 high-voltage electrical towers belonging to the government-owned National Transmission Corporation (Transco), succeeding on a number of occasions to trigger mass blackouts in Mindanao that lasted for several hours (see, e.g., "Transco Towers Bombed, Half of Mindanao in Darkness," 2008, and Jubelag, 2008). As one AFP official observed, whereas ASG, MILF, and the dissident MNLF faction are generally isolated in the south of the country and aim only for autonomy or secession, the NPA operates nationally and sees itself as the main vehicle for implementing people's power through a sustained campaign of sabotage and disruption.⁷²

Patterns of Recruitment and Radicalization. In its heyday, CCP cadres were recruited primarily from left-wing activists attending the University of the Philippines, with induction taking place gradually through legal but increasingly radical protest organizations. Today, people continue to join for ideological reasons, though communal relationships are playing an increasingly important role.⁷³ However, unlike radical Islamic groups, these social networks are typically not blood-based. In fact, the families of young people who join the CPP frequently oppose their decision—usually out of fear for their own personal safety.⁷⁴

Most of the NPA rank and file, on the other hand, come from a peasant background and are motivated not by ideology but by a sense of injustice. Common sources of discontent generally relate to land

⁷¹ Author interviews, Manila, Cotabato City, and Zamboanga, January 2008.

⁷² Author interviews, Manila, January 2008.

⁷³ One former activist joined the CPP along with his entire social network (author interview, Manila, January 2008).

⁷⁴ Author interview, Manila, January 2008.

disputes, rapacious actions by landlords and local authorities, abuses by the security forces, and various forms of economic inequity. For the impoverished and otherwise aggrieved, the NPA not only acts as a viable vehicle for redressing these problems, it also offers a means of livelihood as well as a potential conduit to spur further social mobility. Leveraging this mindset, rather than resorting to coercive intimidation, has been the main tact of NPA recruitment—though the group has not been above ominously designating those who resist its overtures as “class enemies” and stooges of Manila’s U.S.-supported capitalist system.⁷⁵

Attitude of the General Population. The CPP-NPA has been able to survive for 40 years because of structural conditions in Philippine society—including, notably, extreme social inequity and the absence of effective government institutions (particularly in the countryside)—that have allowed the development of parallel political and military institutions. In areas where the CPP-NPA has established a concerted presence, it is usually because it is seen as the only entity capable of maintaining order (by, for example, setting up mechanisms to punish petty criminals or banish cattle rustlers). In regions where it has been able to completely displace the government, this is largely due to its effective provision of critical public services. In other words, people accept the CPP-NPA not so much as a result of a particular affinity for the communist ideology but as an expression of general disillusionment with the functioning capacity or governing legitimacy of the state.⁷⁶ General popular dissatisfaction with the present administration in Manila—manifested through the “Oust Arroyo” campaign and reflecting widespread perceptions of official graft, corruption, and abuse of power—has helped entrench this cognitive stance and is certainly something that the CPP-NPA has both recognized and exploited to its advantage.⁷⁷

CPP-NPA infiltration and control of a local area, referred to as “expansion work,” occurs in phases. The first stage is reconnaissance

⁷⁵ Author interviews, Manila, January 2008.

⁷⁶ Author interview, Manila, January 2008.

⁷⁷ Author interviews, Manila, January 2008.

by unarmed individuals who perform what is called “social investigation.” This typically involves delineating friends (who can then be used as a residual base from which to organize) and identifying enemies. Next comes “armed propaganda”—a show of force that is performed to establish an NPA benchmark of power that underscores its relevance as both a meaningful and viable ideological concept. The final stage takes the form of active aggression directed against specific adversaries. Suspected enemies, such as government spies and collaborators, are generally warned (usually with a note attached to a bullet) and then killed if the threat to desist from their activities is ignored.⁷⁸ People implicated in lesser “crimes” or those associated with a simple blood debt are also frequently punished, though typically short of execution, given the possibility of adverse consequences.⁷⁹

Fund-raising at the local level does not directly affect community relations, as it mostly consists of extorting from businesses, politicians, and bureaucrats.⁸⁰ The NPA frequently demands that companies pay either a “revolutionary tax” or a set premium from their annual profits to operate and has even, on occasion, sought to procure a percentage share of *barangay* internal revenue allotments.⁸¹ During elections, politicians have also been targeted for “permit-to-campaign” fees. In 2004, for example, congressional candidates were required to pay 500,000 pesos (approximately US\$12,500) to access NPA-controlled areas (the equivalent fee for mayors was 50,000 pesos, or roughly US\$1,250). In instances in which demands for money are ignored or not met, death threats are typically issued and, if necessary, followed up with more directed violence (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2006).

⁷⁸ In May 2008, for instance, the NPA publicly executed two village leaders in North Cotabato and Compostela Valley after warning local officials against participating in the government’s anticommunist drive (see “NPA Rebs Kill 2 More Village Execs in North Cotabato, Compostela Valley,” 2008).

⁷⁹ Executions could provoke retaliation in the form of a government offensive if, for instance, an elected official is killed (author interview, Manila, January 2008).

⁸⁰ It should be noted that, in some cases, the NPA has demanded that well-off villagers pay a percentage of their annual earnings to support the communist struggle.

⁸¹ In February 2004, for instance, the NPA started demanding a 20-percent share of the Masbate (in Bicol) *barangay* allotments.

A case in point occurred in January 2008, when communists bombed the Tampakan copper project in Mindanao, justifying the attack on the grounds that it was punishing Sagittarius Mines (the local company overseeing the concession) for its “plunderous” activities. But the key target was almost certainly Xstrata, a huge UK-Swiss conglomerate that had recently announced that Tampakan would be its most important venture during the coming year, irrespective of the adverse operating conditions (read: extortion threats) inherent in the southern Philippines (see “Xstrata Under Attack in the Philippines,” 2008).

Evidence of Cross-Border Links. The CPP-NPA has an established and widespread global network; indeed, the leader of the communist insurgency, Jose Maria Sison, remains in self-imposed exile in the Netherlands. Most of the CPP-NPA’s international activities are coordinated through the International League of People’s Struggle (ILPS), which is chaired by Sison. According to its Web site, the ILPS was founded in 2001 as an “anti-imperialist and democratic formation. It promotes, supports and develops the anti-imperialist and democratic struggles of the peoples of the world against imperialism and all reaction” (ILPS, undated).⁸² The ILPS is charged primarily with the dual tasks of political lobbying and fund-raising. With regard to the former, the current principal objective is the pressured removal of the NPA from the U.S. and EU foreign terrorist organization lists. As part of this effort, Sison is actively seeking to mobilize prominent left-wing protest organizations in Europe and harness their backing in support of the Filipino communist cause.⁸³ On the financial front, the CPP-NPA mostly engages foreign NGOs to raise funds, though according to various sources in Manila, overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) are

⁸² Although the ILPS purports to be an independent international organization, the CPP appears to be the controlling entity.

⁸³ Author interviews, Manila, January 2008. These efforts have been only partially successful. Although Sison has managed to prevent his extradition from the Netherlands, the NPA’s terrorist designation continues to stand in both the United States and the EU. Moreover, the Dutch government is actively investigating Sison’s alleged role in the murder of former CPP leaders Romulo Kintanar and Arturo Tabara, who were killed in the Philippines in 2003 and 2004, respectively.

now also being increasingly leveraged as a source of money.⁸⁴ This is especially true of Hong Kong, which is one of the main destinations of Filipinos working overseas (given its proximity—only a two-hour flight from Manila) and where there is a thriving underground Chinese remittance system in place. The main brokers utilized by overseas Filipino workers are located in the World-Wide Plaza, which is in the heart of the Central District.⁸⁵

Links with Other Groups. The CPP-NPA has created or infiltrated a large number of political and civic groups in the Philippines (indeed, this is precisely why Manila regards the communist insurgency as such an insidious threat). These include, notably, political front organizations,⁸⁶ peasant collectives, trade unions, and even churches. As discussed previously, there is also a degree of tactical collaboration between the NPA and MILF that is aimed primarily at managing relations between the two groups in areas of contiguous control.⁸⁷

Assessment

The persistence of insurgent and terrorist networks in Mindanao is fundamentally the result of the general inability of the Philippine state to extend effective governance to the region, a very weak (and, in some areas, nonexistent) law enforcement and judicial system, and extremely high poverty rates compared to the rest of the country. These inter-related conditions have generated deep dissatisfaction on the part of the local population and contributed to chronic gaps in ruling author-

⁸⁴ Author interviews, Manila, January 2008.

⁸⁵ Author interview, Hong Kong, May 2008. There are essentially no barriers to establishing a remittance system in Hong Kong and, in common with the Asian/Middle Eastern *hawalla* system, funds can be sent virtually instantaneously and with a charged commission of only 2–5 percent.

⁸⁶ For example, to participate in the May 2004 elections, the CPP established six political fronts (see Pablo, 2004).

⁸⁷ Author interviews, Manila and Zamboanga, January 2008; see also Strinus-Remonde, 2007.

ity that have been filled by competing poles of power of both the Moro and communist varieties.

Although MILF, MBG, ASG, and CPP-NPA all derive sustenance from the socioeconomic inequities and structural weaknesses inherent in the Philippine state, there are significant differences among them. The communist insurgency, which has a history of only 40 years, is nationwide and linked to an international movement and has as its goal the complete transformation of Filipino society. The various Moro groups, by contrast, are motivated by a tradition of resistance that goes back to the time of Spanish colonization and has since been systematically reinforced by Manila's repeated attempts to integrate Mindanao into the wider Philippine polity. Moreover, unlike the CPP-NPA, the goals of the major Moro organizations are limited and parochial: MILF and MBG merely seek some degree of autonomy in the southern Philippines (not a complete overhaul of the state) and, while the ASG has harbored larger and more ambitious Islamist ambitions in coordination with JI, the group has not broached any realistic strategy for achieving these aims.

There are also significant differences in recruitment and outlook between Moro and communist militants. While ethnic and kinship ties constitute the basis of recruitment into MILF, MBG, and ASG, they do not have any real relevance for the CPP-NPA. For the latter, induction and membership are driven more by ideological motivations (in the case of the higher-level cadres) or socioeconomic grievances (in the case of the rank and file).

While the CPP-NPA remains a prime focus of concern for the AFP (officials believe that the insurgency will be ongoing for at least another two years),⁸⁸ violence associated with the Moro conflict has decreased significantly since Manila and MILF signed their July 2003 cease-fire. Attacks have dropped off to around 50 per month and for the most part are now confined to the Sulu archipelago, where the ASG and MBG are based. The future threat environment pertaining to

⁸⁸ The AFP has set 2010 as a target date for achieving a strategic victory over the CPP-NPA (defined as reducing its current numbers, influence, and operational capabilities by 75 percent) (author interviews, Zamboanga, January 2008).

Muslim extremism in the southern Philippines will very much depend on the success (or otherwise) of ongoing MILF peace negotiations between Murad and the Arroyo administration. A successful outcome will isolate radical elements, both within and outside MILF, and (in so doing) help to make the task of reducing or eliminating extant militant threats more feasible. Should the talks terminally fail, however, a return to major violence is likely. According to senior AFP officials, MILF will respond with a concerted campaign of terrorism, executed through its urban sabotage wing (the Special Operations Group) in direct collaboration with the ASG, MBG, and possibly outside jihadists connected to the JI network.⁸⁹

The nature and direction of U.S. foreign internal defense assistance also has salience with respect to possible future threat contingencies in the southern Philippines. To date, all aid has been allocated to assisting AFP offensives against the ASG, which Washington sees as integral to the global war on terrorism (GWOT), given the group's past and suspected continued ties to JI. The United States has been extremely careful to impress that its military support to Manila is aimed only against militant Islamists and is not designed to subvert legitimate Moro interests.⁹⁰ Thus far, there is no indication that MILF views U.S. foreign internal defense assistance as potentially threatening to its agenda or existence. Should this perception change, however—as a result of either U.S. or Philippine actions—there is a danger that not only the group but (more worryingly) Moros as a whole will begin to conceive and interpret their struggle in international as well as domestic terms (and concomitantly start to target both the “far” and “near” enemy) (see, e.g., Schmitt, 2008).

⁸⁹ Author interviews, Zamboanga, January 2008; see also “2 Killed, 2 Hurt in Spate of Shooting in Cotabato City,” 2008.

⁹⁰ Washington currently does not provide any security assistance to mitigate the CPP-NPA insurgency, largely because Manila regards this as a purely domestic issue. Philippine security experts are especially concerned that an irretrievable collapse of the peace talks will encourage third-party extremists, as well as hard-line MILF elements opposed to any form of negotiated settlement with Manila, to engage in a sustained campaign of bombings designed to trigger a wider conflict in Mindanao.

Terrorism and National Security in Indonesia

Militant Context

Violent political extremism has emerged as an increasingly salient threat in Indonesia ever since President Soeharto was forced to step down from power in 1998. Almost overnight, the country moved to shed the vestiges of nearly four decades of authoritarian rule in favor of an open political system based on democratic principles. Successfully achieving such a transition was always going to be fraught with difficulties. However, continuing uncertainty over the country's economic health—which has still to fully recover from the effects of the Asian financial crisis of the late 1990s¹—together with a succession of weak governments have combined to dramatically escalate the latent risks associated with this transformation. Not only have poverty, inflation, and unemployment interacted with a fluid domestic political environment to produce major outbursts of civil and communal violence—notably in Kalimantan, Maluku (Ambo), and Sulawesi (Poso)²—general dissatisfaction with the administrative performance of Jakarta has galvanized a reawakening of atavistic Islamic identity that has further entrenched and radicalized popular sentiment across the archi-

¹ The crisis was precipitated by the forced devaluation of the Thai baht, which set in motion a general run on regional currencies throughout Southeast Asia. The crisis was particularly marked in Indonesia and was one of the key factors that led to Soeharto's fall.

² For more on the conflicts in Kalimantan, Maluku, and Central Sulawesi, see ICG, 2000, 2001, and 2002a; Achwan et al., 2005; van Klinken, 2007; Sidel, 2006; Hefner, 2000; HRW, 2002; and Aragon, 2001.

pelago (Manyin et al., 2004, p. 12; Sebastian, 2003). As Angel Rabasa has observed,

After Suharto's resignation in May 1998, the tight controls on political activity were loosened. The new freewheeling political environment enabled Muslim extremists to . . . attempt to take advantage of the weakening state authority and to use opportunistic alliances with military and political factions associated with the Suharto regime to undermine the country's nascent democratic institutions and bring about the establishment of an Islamic state. (Rabasa, 2004, pp. 381–382; see also M. Davis, 2002)

Although the overwhelming majority of Muslims in Indonesia (which constitutes the world's largest Islamic nation)³ remain both moderate and progressive, the aforementioned internal developments have fed a growing fundamentalist theological undercurrent that has provided fertile ground for the emergence of a kaleidoscope of radical groupings with militant tendencies.⁴ Eight entities have attracted particular attention in the post-Soeharto era: Laskar Jihad (LJ), Laskar

³ Roughly 90 percent of Indonesia's 245 million people affirm that they belong to the Islamic faith.

⁴ It should be noted that Indonesia also confronted serious separatist threats in the immediate aftermath of Soeharto's fall, notably in East Timor, Aceh, and Papua. However, in the case of East Timor, a UN-supervised popular referendum returned a vote for independence in August 1999, with the country formally attaining sovereign statehood on September 27, 2002. In Aceh, formal hostilities ceased with the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the Free Aceh Movement, or Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (GAM, the principal militant group associated with the conflict), and the government of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono on August 15, 2005. And in Papua, the principal protagonist, the Free Papua Movement, or Organisasi Papua Merdeka (OPM), now exists primarily as a political movement with an extremely limited (and, indeed, largely symbolic) military capability that poses no threat to Jakarta. Accordingly, none of these separatist challenges is considered in this chapter as currently germane to internal Indonesian security and terrorism considerations.

For further details on East Timor's tumultuous transition to independence, see Chalk, 2001. Good overviews of the GAM conflict can be found in Sjamsuddin, 1985; Schulze, 2004; HRW, 2001, 2003, and 2004; and Sukma, 2004. For overviews of the OPM conflict in Papua (or Irian Jaya) and its current status, see Bell, Feith, and Hatley, 1986; Connell, 1997; Dorney, 1990; Turner, 1990; McGibbon, 2006; ICG, 2002c; Chauvel, 2005; Chauvel and

Jundullah, Front Pembela Islam (FPI), Komite Aksi Pennanggulangan Akibat Krisis (KOMPAK) Mujahidin (KM), Angkatan Mujahidin Islam Nusantara (AMIN), Kelompok Banten (or Ring Banten), and Hizb ut-Tahrir Indonesia (HTI). These organizations can be grouped into three main categories: (1) nationalist Islamists who do not advocate the overthrow of the current Indonesian state but, rather, seek its further religious “purification” (LJ and FPI); (2) antistatist Islamists who regard the Indonesian state as fundamentally illegitimate and call for the establishment of a fully theocratic caliphate in its stead—either in its own right or as part of a wider pan-regional objective (Laskar Jundullah, KM, AMIN, and Ring Banten); and (3) organizations that can best be described as nascent jihadist militias (HTI). These various groupings are discussed next.

Militant Groupings—Nationalist Islamists

Laskar Jihad

LJ was formed as the military wing of the Java-based Forum Komunikasi Ahlus Sunnah wal Jama'ah (FKAWJ, or the Communications Forum of the Followers of Sunnah)⁵ on January 30, 2000. The organization professed a three-part mission: social work, education, and security—to both protect co-religionists from communal violence in the Moluccas and Central Sulawesi and to defend the unity of Indonesia in the face of Christian separatists fighting in Ambon.⁶ Thalib

Bhakti, 2004; “Organisasi Papua Merdeka (OPM),” 2008; “Laskar Jihad: A Spent Force?” 2004; and Kivimaki, 2006.

⁵ FKAWJ was established on February 14, 1998, by *ustadz* Ja'far Umar Thalib and a group of fellow Salafi leaders. Its professed purpose was to “purify and spread” Islam in order to realize the full implementation of sharia law in Indonesia. Viewing the Muslim religion and democracy as incompatible, it called for the republic to be governed by a council of experts dominated by those learned in Islamic law (see Fealy, 2001).

⁶ The Ambonese separatist movement dates to the early 1950s, when a number of Christian elites (as well as some Muslims) proclaimed the Republik Maluku Selatan (the Republic of the South Moluccas), opting for independence (with continued ties to the Netherlands) instead of joining the newly independent Indonesia. Jakarta quickly quelled the uprising, however, and many of its supporters fled to the Netherlands. A small remnant separatist

claimed that each of these latter causes was theologically justified in the Koran and that, in the face of grave government impotency, jihad was required to defend Muslims and the republic.⁷

LJ became the largest of the post-Soeharto militant groups, and at its peak in 2001 claimed to have a membership of 10,000 (Fealy and Borgu, 2005, p. 40). Between 2000 and 2002, the organization dispatched thousands to the Moluccas and Central Sulawesi with 2000 “officially” declared the year of the “jihad against *kafir harbi*” (literally, belligerent infidels) (Fealy, 2001; Rabasa, 2004, pp. 386–387; M. Davis, 2002; Pradadimara and Junedding, 2002; “Leader of the ‘Jihad Army’ in Indonesia to ‘Al-Hayat’: We Plan to Target American Interests,” 2002; “Java’s Angry Young Muslims,” 2001; “Holy War in the Spice Islands,” 2001).

On October 7, 2002 (one week prior to the Bali bombings), the FKAJW and LJ disbanded voluntarily, largely due to a growing conviction that the groups had been politicized and were evolving in a direction that was likely to be detrimental to the wider Salafist cause in Indonesia.⁸ As the ICG observes, much of this perception stemmed from a general dissatisfaction with Thalib’s leadership:

[S]ome Forum members were concerned . . . that Ja’far through his activities with Laskar Jihad had violated deeply held salafi principles. They believed that Laskar Jihad increasingly was taking on the

organization remains today, the Front Kedaulatan Maluku (Maluku Sovereignty Front); it was against this group that LJ dispatched fighters to Ambon, justifying the move to protect the unity of the Indonesian state.

⁷ In Thalib’s own words,

Allah’s soldiers have received a military obligation as stated by Allah: “Jihad is ordained for you though you dislike it and it may be that you dislike a thing which is good for you and that you like a thing which is bad for you. And Allah knows but you do not know!” . . . Therefore, Allah has ordained the military obligation to us as Allah’s soldiers. . . . I order all members of the Laskar Jihad of Ahlussunnah Wal Jamaah to write their will and testament and prepare themselves to take up the position of martyrs. Get all the weaponry out. (Thalib, 2002)

⁸ Besides the loss in confidence of Thalib’s leadership, the decision to disband LJ reflected a growing unwillingness on the part of the TNI to protect the group as a “proxy” militia as well as heightened difficulties in raising funds (see Fealy and Borgu, 2005, p. 41).

characteristics of a political organization, that Ja'far was consorting with politicians far too often, and that by becoming a high-profile media personality, beloved of television cameras, he was willfully transgressing salafi strictures against the representation, in art or photographs, of living creatures. (ICG, 2004c, p. 17)

Thalib was arrested on charges of incitement in May 2002. He has since been released from jail and is currently described as a marginal figure working in the guise of an educational activist, heading the Pondok Ehya as-Sunnah in Jogjakarta, which he founded in 1993 (Ahmad-Noor, 2007, p. 54). However, Thalib's legacy of polarization and religious violence has had a lasting impact on Indonesian society and will continue to do so as long as the teaching of militant Islamism continues without check in his *pesantren* (boarding school) and many other educational institutions across the country.

Front Pembela Islam

Background and Objectives. FPI and its militant wing, Komando Laskar Islam (KLI), were founded in 1998 by Habib Muhammad Rizieq Shihab and KH Misbahul Anam at Pesantren al-Umm Ciputat in South Jakarta.⁹ The group describes itself as a Salafi organization whose aim is to take an active role in "improving and maintaining moslem's [sic] morale and faith as well as to take initiative in building [a] social, political, and [legal] infrastructure that is in line with Islamic syariah" (FPI, 2007; see also Sidel, 2006, p. 139). Like the FKAWJ, FPI does not advocate the dismantling of the present Indonesian state and its replacement with a religious theocracy. Rather, it calls for the implementation of sharia law (as recorded in the Koran and Sunnah) through the adoption of the Jakarta Charter as a part of the republic's constitution (Jamhari, 2003, p. 12).¹⁰ Rizieq justifies this reasoning on

⁹ Habib Rizieq was born in Jakarta on August 24, 1965, and is of Hadhrami Arab descent. He is a graduate in Islamic Law from King Saud University in Saudi Arabia, according to Indonesian media reports.

¹⁰ The Jakarta Charter refers to seven words that were attached to the first principle of Indonesia's national ideology, Pancasila (belief in one supreme God), and that emphasized the obligation for Muslims to live according to Islamic law. The qualifying statement was

two levels: first, that priority should be given to making individuals better Muslims rather than changing the basis of the country in which they live, and second, that while the Koran explicitly calls for sharia to be upheld, it does not call expressly for or define an Islamic state (Fealy and Borgu, 2006, p. 39).

In its early days, FPI served mostly as a proxy for the Indonesian military—the Tentara Nasional Indonesia (TNI)—attacking student protestors at antigovernment demonstrations (Jamhari, 2003, p. 10; Hefner, 2002, pp. 15–17).¹¹ However, the organization soon became known for carrying out violent attacks on bars, nightclubs, discotheques, brothels, and gambling outlets. Clad in white tunics and wielding long sticks and machetes, KLI militia members justified their violence as necessary to “eradicate immorality” from Indonesian society (Sidel, 2006, p. 139).¹²

Rizieq was arrested in 2002 and found guilty of inciting hatred, for which he received a sentence of seven months. Although FPI activities were temporarily frozen during his imprisonment, vigilante assaults resumed in 2003, with the group targeting any establishment deemed to be a “den of vice.” This general thrust of militant activity remained consistent for the next several years, though in 2008, the organization emerged as one of the leading entities associated with persecuting members of the Ahmadiyah movement.¹³ Indeed, FPI’s secretary general, Sobri Lubis, has been filmed explicitly urging his followers to kill those belonging to the sect and calling for a war to fully expunge its influence from Indonesia (“Ahmadiyah Members in Danger,” 2008). That same year, the group led a violent attack on members of Aliansi

briefly incorporated into initial drafts of the republic’s constitution in 1945 but subsequently removed. Their “illegal” deletion remains a sore point for politicized Indonesian Muslims to this day.

¹¹ According to Hefner (2002), FPI was established with direct assistance of high-ranking TNI officials, including its then-commander, General Wiranto.

¹² It should be noted that KLI attacks on businesses in Jakarta were also carried out as a means of extorting money from the owners of these establishments.

¹³ The Ahmadiyah movement is considered a heretical sect in the mainstream Muslim world because it recognizes Mirza Gulam Ahmad, the group’s leader, as a prophet after Muhammad. For more on the movement, see Forbes, 2008.

Kebangsaan untuk Kebebasan Beragama dan Berkeyakinan (AKKBB, the National Alliance for Religious and Faith Freedom) at a demonstration in support of freedom of religion and faith at the National Monument (Monas) in Jakarta (Patung, 2008a). These actions have had a pernicious impact, not least in dangerously polarizing Indonesian society and religious sentiment.

Structure and Size. FPI is believed to have several thousand members spread across 22 provinces, though the capital, Jakarta, constitutes its principal area of strength and major theater of operation.¹⁴ The group has four levels of leadership: (1) a central command (Dewan Pimpinan Pusat), which is responsible for the national level of the organization and has an executive and an advisory board; (2) the principal command (Dewan Pimpinan Daerah), which includes the heads of the advisory boards of the city and provincial branches; (3) the district command (Dewan Pimpinan Wilayah); and (4) the subdistrict command (Dewan Pimpinan Cabang). In outlying areas, FPI enjoys a systematic chain of command that extends down to the village level; this has enabled the leadership to rapidly mobilize supporters whenever a perceived need to “take action against immorality” has arisen.¹⁵

Patterns of Recruitment and Radicalization. Recruits to FPI have come from communities in the outskirts of Jakarta, such as Ciputata and Bekasi, and from urban slums where unemployed youths have been attracted by the group’s “tough image and the promise of payment for each action they joined.”¹⁶ Rizieq has also been able to mobilize support from among networks of Hadhrami Arab descendants who are highly respected among Jakarta’s Betawi (indigenous) community (Jamhari, 2003, p. 1). In addition, FPI has managed to attract idealist (if fanatical) Islamists who are opposed to Western culture and convinced that

¹⁴ Following the attack on the AKKBB rally in June 2008, Rizieq and several dozen other FPI members were arrested, after which a number of the group’s branches in central and eastern Java were closed (see Patung, 2008a).

¹⁵ Author interviews, Jakarta, November 2007 and January 2008.

¹⁶ Hefner (2002, p. 15) further notes that, by blurring “the divide between religious vigilantism and criminality,” FPI’s rank and file came to include “members of a distinctively Indonesian form of criminal syndicate known as *preman*.”

there is an American and Jewish conspiracy against Muslim Indonesia. These radicalized youth have been leveraged to form regional organizations, which have, in turn, provided the platform for propagating FPI's key message of the need to adopt sharia in both the private and the public spheres (Hefner, 2002, p. 15).

Attitude of the General Population. While FPI's membership has not increased in relative numbers over the past few years, its actions do find support among conservative elements of the Indonesian population. The group's leading role in persecuting the Ahmadiyah movement has been especially popular, with many in the country actively calling for the sect to be banned as an aberration of the Islamic faith (Patung, 2008b). In view of 2009 being an election year, it is possible that leaders of the various Islamist political parties will also take up the cause of the group, as has the chairman of the Development United Party, who visited Rizieq in jail following the FPI's attack on the AKKBB Jakarta rally in June 2008.¹⁷

Links with Other Groups. FPI has established a range of contacts with various radical organizations in Indonesia. In East Java, it has joined with hardliners from Nahdatul Ulama¹⁸ to attack meetings of the leftist-orientated Papernas, accusing it of reconstituting the Communist Party. The group has also worked with members of the youth arm of Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah Pasuruan to demand the banning of certain Shia sects on the basis that their practice regarding marriage is not in accordance with sharia.¹⁹ FPI's violent stance against moderate and so-called "heretical" Islamic entities has additionally gained traction with other movements, including HTI, which participated in the 2008 attack on AKKBB (Patung, 2008a).

Evidence of Cross-Border Links. In its earlier years, FPI received substantial funds from Saudi Arabia (Hefner, 2002, p. 15). At the time

¹⁷ Author interviews, Jakarta, January 2008.

¹⁸ Nahdatul Ulama is a Sunni entity and the largest Islamic political grouping in Indonesia, with a total membership of perhaps 30 million. The movement also acts as a charitable body, funding schools and hospitals, as well as helping to organize local communities (*kampungs*) to better battle poverty. For more on the group, see PHILTAR, undated(b).

¹⁹ Author interviews, Jakarta, January 2008.

of this writing, however, there did not appear to be any external dimension to the group's agenda nor to its networks.

Antistatist Islamists

Laskar Jundullah, KOMPAK Movement, AMIN, and Ring Banten

Although existing as notionally independent movements whose immediate catalyst lay with the outbreak of communal violence in the Moluccas and Sulawesi, all of these organizations stemmed from a common Darul Islam (DI) ideological heritage that saw its ultimate cause as the creation of the Negara Islam Indonesia, or Islamic state of Indonesia (see Chapter Five). In many cases, they were also characterized by a complex lattice of overlapping membership reflecting ethnic, tribal, or familial links. Combined, these facets contributed to the evolution of an extremist milieu that for all intents and purposes constituted one extended network. Therefore, it is within this context that one must assess the scope, nature, and thrust of these organizations.

Background and Objectives. Agus Dwikarna established Laskar Jundullah, a militia of the Komite Pengerakan Syariat Islam, or Committee to Uphold Islamic Law, in 2000. Although the group sent a small contingent of fighters to participate in the anti-Christian struggle taking place in Ambon and Poso, its main operational and ideological agenda was more explicitly focused on ridding Indonesia of all un-Islamic influences as part of a concerted effort to institute a new (as opposed to reformed) religious-political order based on sharia law (Abuza, 2005a, p. 48; ICG, 2004a, pp. 6, 11). In pursuit of this goal, Laskar Jundullah has been implicated in numerous attacks against symbols of Western decadence and commercialism—including fast-food outlets, karaoke bars, gambling halls, and drinking establishments—and remains accused of collaborating closely with JI in the series of bomb attacks that struck Manila and Jakarta during December 2000 (see Chapter Five; ICG, 2004a, p. 11; and “Manila Mulls the Repatriation of Jailed Indonesian,” 2002).

KM allegedly emerged in 2000 as the brainchild of Abu Jibril. The organization initially crystallized as a recruiting conduit for

regional jihadists seeking to fight in Poso and was set up through the Solo branch of KOMPAK, an Islamic charity created in 1998 under the Dewan Dakwah Islam Indonesia, or Islam Propagation Council of Indonesia, to assist Muslims affected by natural disasters, conflict, and poverty (Abuza, 2005a, p. 47; “Mujahidin KOMPAK,” 2005). In common with Laskar Jundullah, however, KM’s real focus appears to have been on the full institution of sharia law, with the anti-Christian struggle in Sulawesi merely acting as a staging and training ground for a far larger enterprise: the complete Islamic transformation of the Indonesian state (ICG, 2004a, pp. 4–5; see also ICG, 2002d).²⁰

AMIN emerged sometime between 1999 and 2000. Its membership stemmed from the ranks of the Abu Bakar Battalion’s Kompi (company) F, which had been established in mid-1999 to recruit and train fighters for the Ambon conflict. In addition to committed jihadists, the group also included a large number of thugs and thieves turned mujahidin, who essentially bankrolled the movement by robbing businesses and institutions owned by “nonbelievers”—defined as both Christians and nonradical Muslims (ICG, 2005a, pp. 24–26). Again, while Christian-Muslim violence in the Moluccas acted as the initial genesis for AMIN, its overarching agenda was predicated on the wider imperative of fully instituting a strict interpretation of Islam in Indonesia. From the group’s perspective, participating in communal conflict in Ambon and, later, Poso was viewed as instrumental to this purpose, as both were seen as especially ripe for the implementation of sharia law and, therefore, ideally suited for serving as an anchor from which to launch a wider, nationally oriented transformational (as opposed to purely defensive) jihad (see, e.g., ICG, 2004a, p. 19).

Ring Banten was reportedly created by Kang Jaja (aka Akhdam) in 2000 to help recruit for, train, and otherwise support Islamist forces fighting in Maluku and Sulawesi. The group established a central camp in Pendolo on the shores of Lake Poso and, inspired by KM, used a charity known as Bulan Sabit Merah Indonesia as a front for its mili-

²⁰ This focus is arguably reflected by the small number of fighters that KM actually sent to Sulawesi, totaling no more than 500 at the height of its involvement in the province’s anti-Christian violence.

tary activities. By 2002, Ring Banten had developed a sizable armory, including pistols, automatic rifles, explosives, and RPGs, emerging as a de facto “labour recruiting agency” for both KM and Laskar Jundullah (ICG, 2005a, pp. 27–29).

Structure and Size. The porous and amorphous nature of these groups, together with their clandestine character, makes it difficult to assess with any real degree of accuracy their individual size or makeup. However, some preliminary observations can be made. KM is thought to consist mostly of a loose network of veterans from the Ambon and Poso conflicts who continue to be funded by KOMPAK. While the group has no formal structure, it is thought that a few text messages or mobile phone calls can quickly bring a dozen or so members together.²¹ Ring Banten is estimated to consist of around 70–80 members, the bulk of whom are located in the provinces of Banten and West Java. The group also allegedly enjoys a wider support base among related family and business associates.²²

Patterns of Recruitment and Radicalization. As noted, a complex lattice of overlapping membership that reflects ethnic, tribal, or familial links has been a notable characteristic of all these groups. This is particularly true of Ring Banten, for which core family members have been an especially important source of recruitment.²³ In addition, each has inducted members by emphasizing their primary role in defending Muslim interests in Maluku and Sulawesi, as well as fighting for the creation of a political order that is predicated on the full implementation of sharia law. Prisons, by virtue of their porous nature, have served as vital recruitment hubs, allowing incarcerated demagogues to propagate diatribes denouncing the current Indonesian state as fundamentally at odds with the ideal of the Islamic faith as put forward in the Koran.²⁴

²¹ Author interviews, Jakarta, January 2008; ICG, 2007b, p. 14.

²² Author interviews, Jakarta, November 2007 and January 2008.

²³ Author interviews, Jakarta, November 2007 and January 2008.

²⁴ Author interviews, Jakarta, November 2007 and January 2008.

Attitude of Local Population

Attitude of the General Population. All of these groups operate in secret but nevertheless find affinity among family members and DI adherents who consider jihadist operations in pursuit of Islamizing Indonesia to be legitimate. That said, attacks against the JW Marriott Hotel (in 2003) and the Australian Embassy (in 2004)—both of which resulted in significant Indonesian Muslim casualties (see Chapter Five)—have generated popular dissatisfaction with the tactics of extreme Islamist radicalism. Local traction is thus fungible; while the goals of these groups may be supported, their tactics are by no means universally vindicated.

Links with Other Groups. All the antistatist organizations discussed here have sought to establish links with JI. Indeed, these groups viewed the conflicts in Poso and Ambon (the trigger for their initial creation) not so much as objectives in their own right but as precursors for a larger and much wider Islamist struggle that would eventually extend from secure and isolated religious bases in Maluku and Sulawesi to the entire Indonesian archipelago.

That said, it is really only Ring Banten that has sought to establish links with JI in support of external regional jihadist designs. Although Laskar Jundullah, KM, and AMIN have certainly been animated by far more open-ended religious sentiments, they have all essentially defined their agendas in the context of *Indonesian* (as opposed to Southeast Asian) Islamization. According to these groups, it is Jakarta's secular orientation and willingness to actively embrace Western-led globalization and capitalism that is at the root of the country's problems (and those of its Muslim population) and, hence, the principal aberration that needs to be "corrected" (Manyin et al., 2004, p. 13; Vaughn, 2005, pp. 2, 5–6). To the extent that these views correlate with those of JI traditionalists, the traction of this ideology would appear to be strong.

Beyond this, however, the JI network would seem to have relatively limited appeal. There is no indication that Laskar Jundullah, KM, and AMIN have ever sought to extend the scope of the Islamist struggle beyond Indonesia (which, it needs to be stressed, remains the ultimate—if not immediate—goal of the JI movement). Moreover, given the negative popular reaction to strikes in Bali (2002 and 2005),

as well as those against the Marriott and Australian Embassy in Jakarta (2003 and 2004, respectively), it is unlikely that there is any real degree of affinity for the movement's pro-bombing faction.²⁵ In the words of one Australian academic who follows the evolving nature of Indonesian militancy closely, "It is hard to imagine how [these groups] would see killing large numbers of Muslims as in any way contributing to the DI call, much less wider Islamic interests in Indonesia or Southeast Asia."²⁶

Ring Banten, by contrast, has actively supported both the notion of a regional jihad and the use of directed, forceful action. Several members of the group are known graduates of Pondok Ngruki *pesantren*—the alleged wellspring of JI's hardline Islamist vision—who have since acted as central advocates for operations that have clearly been aimed at inflicting damage on "far" as opposed to "near" enemies (ICG, 2005a, pp. 27–30). This was perhaps best reflected in the intimate involvement of Ring Banten in the Bali (2002) and Australian Embassy (2004) bombings, two of the most decisive anti-Western terrorist incidents to have taken place thus far in Southeast Asia. Iqbal, the martyr who blew himself up at Paddy's Bar in the first attack, was a Ring Banten—not JI—member,²⁷ while primary responsibility for coordinating and arranging the weapons and personnel used in the second strike fell to Iwan (aka Rois),²⁸ the nephew of Kang Jaya (ICG, 2005a, pp. 29–30). As the ICG observes, no other group in Indonesia has ever been militarily outsourced to JI in this manner (ICG, 2006, p. i).

²⁵ It should be noted that these observations are made in the context of Laskar Jundullah, KM, and AMIN as groups; given the cross-cutting membership of jihadis in Indonesia, ad hoc or personal links between these organizations and JI are not only entirely feasible, they have also been shown to exist.

²⁶ Comment made during the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, U.S. State Department, Workshop on Emerging Threats in Africa and Southeast Asia, Washington, D.C., August 19, 2005.

²⁷ Prior to carrying out the bombing in Bali, Iqbal left a suicide note affirming his hope that the attack would help inspire others to restore the glory of the Islamic state of Indonesia.

²⁸ Rois was arrested in November 2004.

Nascent Jihadist Networks

Hizb ut-Tahrir Indonesia

HTI is part of an international organization, Hizb ut-Tahrir (HuT), that was founded in Jerusalem in 1953 by Taqiuddin Al-Nabhani, an Egyptian-trained Palestinian religious scholar.²⁹ HTI first started to operate clandestinely in Indonesia in the early 1980s with the arrival of Abdurrahman al-Bagdadi, an Australian-based HuT teacher and activist born in Lebanon who assumed the party's principal ideological position in the country (Fealy and Borgu, 2005, p. 41).

Background and Objectives. The purported core of HTI's ideology is to "release Muslims from the degrading position they occupy in the world, which is characterized as *dar al-kufr* (abode of infidels)" and to do so by reestablishing the Islamic caliphate, *dar al-Islam* (abode of Islam) (Ahnaf, 2006, p. 6). HTI argues that this is the only way that Muslims can live as God commanded, free of subjugation by non-believers. From the group's perspective, it is therefore not enough to simply apply Islamic law within a state, as other Islamist groups advocate. In the words of HTI, this is like "constructing a mosque on the foundation of a movie theater or nightclub" (Ahnaf, 2006, p. 7). More specifically, the state as an institution must be replaced by a caliphate if the application of sharia is to be authentic.

Structure and Size. Although HTI purports that it does not have an organizational structure or authoritative figure, the movement has a highly visible spokesperson in the guise of Ismail Yusanto, whose activities are closely monitored from abroad by the central HuT leadership. While referring to itself as a "party," the group does not recognize

²⁹ After building a small but committed following in the Middle East, HuT attracted followers in Western Europe, Central Asia, and Southeast Asia. The group is committed to the establishment of an expansionist pan-Islamic state but rejects violent insurrection and terrorism as the means for attaining this objective. HuT is banned throughout most of the Middle East (the exceptions being Lebanon, Yemen, the Palestinian territories, and the United Arab Emirates) as well as Russia, Uzbekistan, and several other Central Asian countries. It remains fully legal in much of Western Europe, apart from Germany, where it is barred from undertaking any public activity on account of promoting antisemitism. For a good overview of the movement given by a former member, see Nawaz, 2008. A personal account of the group's activities and membership in the United Kingdom can also be found in Husain, 2007.

political parties and condemns democratic politics and any engagement with entities that pursue such a course of action. HTI's membership is kept secret, as is the identity of its board of directors (known internally as *majelis wilayah* and publicly as *dewan imamah*). Based on what could be called Leninist principles, the presumed intent is to keep its organizational administrators anonymous and thus secure from public scrutiny. However, in recent years, the organization has been active in attracting a small but dedicated following, establishing groups dedicated to proselytizing its ideology at universities and cells across the country. The movement is particularly strong in West Java, where its headquarters, Ma'had Taqiyuddin an-Nabhani, was established in Yogyakarta in 2005.³⁰

Patterns of Recruitment and Radicalization. From the early days of his teaching, Al-Bagdadi built a strong support base among university students and young intellectuals in Java and Sumatra and, as a result, the bulk of HTI's members tend to be middle-class, urban, and educated (Ahnaf, 2006, p. 61). Today, HTI has established a presence in many tertiary institutions across the archipelago, from Aceh to Papua (Patung, 2006b). The group has emphasized recruitment through public sermons and seminars, weekly group dialogues, and a publication series that includes books, weekly bulletins, and monthly journals. It also holds street demonstrations through which it campaigns on morality issues and the implementation of sharia. At Ma'had Taqiyuddin an-Nabhani, the headquarters in Yogyakarta, free tuition is provided for religious education. A second base for HTI activities was established at the Ulil Albab Mosque at the Indonesian Islamic University, where HTI members, in collaboration with members of Jamaah Tabligh,³¹ decide on the weekly preacher for Friday prayers and approve activities to be held by groups at the mosque and its community center.³²

³⁰ Author interviews, January 2008.

³¹ Jamaah Tabligh is an apolitical movement of spiritual guidance and renewal that originated from Deobandi scholarly sects on the Indian subcontinent and whose networks now extend around the globe (see "Special Coverage: Jama'ah Tabligh," 1997).

³² Author interviews, Jakarta, January 2008.

Attitude of the General Population. Initially, HTI managed to attract crowds of only 500 or so to many of its public programs—modest by Indonesian standards. However, its literature has exhibited a growing circulation in recent times. More significantly, the group now appears to be enjoying somewhat more of a popular following. Indeed, in August 2007, HTI attracted a sizable crowd of some 70,000 people at its rally at Senayan Stadium in Jakarta. The event was billed as the International Khilafah Conference, the purpose of which was to further the goal of restoring the caliphate, or worldwide Islamic state. A number of mainstream Indonesian Muslim leaders attended, and some addressed the crowd, including Din Syamsuddin of Muhammadiyah (literally, Followers of Muhammad), Indonesia's second largest mainstream Muslim organization.³³ However, as Muhammad Ahnaf has argued, the number of people who attended the rally does not necessarily indicate that HTI has strong support, merely that it has the ability “to create a humble, altruistic, simple, and intellectual image of itself . . . [which] can draw sympathy from people who are tired of the elites’ arrogance and corruption and the politicians’ hedonistic and wealthy lifestyles” (Ahnaf, 2006, p. 60).

Links with Other Groups. HTI maintains an agenda of agitating for the implementation of Islamic law in Indonesia. In this respect, it shares a common vision with other Islamist groups and attempts to establish strategic relations with as many such groups as possible, including FPI and (in particular) Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia, an umbrella organization of Islamist groups established in mid-2000 with Abu Bakar Bashir—JI's founder—as emir.³⁴ Through its own com-

³³ Author interviews, Adelaide, May 2008. Muhammadiyah is a reformist organization with roughly 29 million members. Although its leaders and members frequently engage in debate and lobbying activities, the movement is not a political party *per se*, devoting itself more to social and educational activities. For additional details, see PHILTAR, undated(a).

³⁴ Although Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia operates freely in Indonesia, numerous commentators in Southeast Asia assert that it acts as a political cover for Bashir and other top idealogues in the JI leadership, is committed to violence, and defines itself according to an agenda that goes well beyond the “simple” Islamization of the Indonesian republic (comments made during the U.S. Pacific Command Southeast Asia Violent Ideology Strategy Seminar, San Antonio, Tex., October 31–November 1, 2006; see also Abuza, 2005a, p. 46). For more on the group, see its official Web site (Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia, undated).

munication networks, HTI also supports local efforts to introduce sharia, and will join with other groups in attacking perceived symbols of *ma'shiat* (decadence) and perceived threats to Islam's exclusive "truth." For this reason, it has supported efforts to ban the Ahmadiyah and joined FPI in its attack on AKKBB in Jakarta in June 2008.³⁵

Assessment

The past several years have witnessed a significant change in the domestic security environment in Indonesia. Concerted CT sweeps instituted by the police—notably, Detachment 88, which was set up as an elite force within the Indonesian National Police (POLRI) in 2003 (see Chapter Eight)—have served to seriously dampen the operational capabilities of many of the militant entities discussed here. Some 450 prominent arrests and "eliminations" have taken place since 2002, which has not only caused Laskar Jundullah, Ring Banten,³⁶ and AMIN to become all but moribund, it has also generated heightened pressure on JI and affiliated elements to reorient their strategic direction away from active operations and toward a more closely guarded focus on reconsolidation (see Chapter Five). Combined with the effective demise of "hot" communal conflict in Maluku and Sulawesi,³⁷ these developments have helped Jakarta successfully negotiate (if not entirely eliminate) the domestic instability that has been such an endemic feature of the country's post-Soeharto environment (see, e.g., van Klinken, 2007, p. 141).

That said, it is still too early to conclude that Indonesia is "out of the woods" in ridding itself of terrorism and related challenges. Radical Islam continues to be an integral part of the country's domestic politi-

³⁵ Author interviews, Jakarta, November 2007 and January 2008.

³⁶ It should be noted that Laskar Jundullah and KM also suffered heavily from the loss of their respective leaders, both of whom were arrested outside Indonesia in 2002: Dwikarna in the Philippines for illegally possessing explosives and Jibril in Malaysia for links to JI (author interviews, Jakarta, October 2006).

³⁷ The communal conflicts in Maluku and Sulawesi ended with the respective signings of the Malino I and Malino II accords on December 19–20, 2001, and February 12, 2002.

cal landscape, and there is no reason to believe that this will change over the short to medium term. Certainly, the tradition of DI, the wellspring of internal militant jihadism, has yet to be expunged and, somewhat worryingly, continues to be visibly articulated in the sentiments of at least certain elements of the national population (see Chapter Five). The extent to which these attitudes will ultimately succor and legitimate future outbursts of extremist violence will be contingent on a range of local historical and economic factors, some of which may well be out of central government control (as they were in 1997 with the onset of the Asian financial crisis).

Moreover, although weakened, the mainstream of JI has yet to be extinguished as a domestic movement of militant ideas, remaining fully committed to the complete Islamization of the Indonesian republic. Just as seriously, elements associated with both its pro-bombing faction (discussed in further detail in Chapter Five) and its principal national affiliate—Ring Banten—remain active, meaning that future indiscriminate civilian-centric attacks cannot be ruled out.³⁸ The latent threat potential stemming from these and other rogue cells is compounded by the short jail terms that militants typically serve: Not only does this work against effective deradicalization, it also ensures that convicted jihadists are never truly out of the loop in terms of their parent terrorist organizations' activities (see, e.g., ICG, 2007d). An additional and equally serious issue concerns the number of inmates who are radicalized while imprisoned, something that is generally viewed to be symptomatic of the corruption, lack of transparency, and overall porosity presently besetting the Indonesian penal system (see Chapter Eight).

A further problem centers on the proliferation of jihadist literature disseminated via the Internet and sold through back-street vendors and established bookshops. A wide range of material is currently available across Indonesia, which, because it is both cheap and largely unregulated, is also widely accessible. So long as this situation prevails, the specter of “self-radicalization” will remain a serious concern. As discussed in Chapter Five, this certainly has relevance to JI and the

³⁸ Author interviews, Jakarta, October 2006.

manner by which it is seeking to reconsolidate its overall recruitment effort: At least 10 publishing houses currently disseminate works and propaganda associated with the network, one of which has assets in excess of 20 billion rupiah (roughly US\$20,000).³⁹

This incremental process of Islamization is being supported and fostered by the emergent radicalizing influences of nascent, externally linked jihadist entities, such as HTI. The 70,000-strong rally that the group managed to organize in 2007 is noteworthy in this regard. Although some commentators dismissed this event as a “rent-a-crowd” phenomenon or case of youthful curiosity, evidence from the United Kingdom demonstrates that these types of events can be highly instrumental in building a general base of support for the dissemination of radical ideas and action. As the former HuT organizer in Britain, Ed Husain, notes in his book, *The Islamist*, HuT propaganda or ideology “encourages individuals to form an army dedicated to a prolonged military campaign . . . the differences from vigilantism are simply of time and scale” (Husain, 2007, p. 153). Exacerbating matters is HTI’s emphasis on working with as many groups as possible in furthering its aims, which would seem to suggest that, once radicalized, individuals could well be inducted into other more visibly active jihadist ranks—biding their time until some future crisis galvanizes the perceived need for lethal action.

The future driving force and center of gravity for religious fanaticism in Indonesia has arrived at a central defining point that will be determined by the ideas that fuel violent and nonviolent Islamism and the social networks that help give concrete expression to these respective credos. At the time of this writing, the general environment in the country appeared considerably less “target-rich” or opportunistic for terrorism. That said, a latent potential for radicalism persists, and,

³⁹ Author interviews, Jakarta, 2008, and Adelaide, May 2008; see also ICG, 2008a, p. 14. These distributors are members of what appears to be a Ngruki-dominated association, the Serikat Penerbit Islam, or the Islamic Publishers Union, which, itself, seems to be a network of publishers connected with JI, the alumni association (known as IKAPIN) of al-Mukmin *pesantren*, or both. The distributors are listed on the Solobook Web site (Solobook, undated) as Wafa Press, Kafayeh Cipta Media, Inasmedia, Aqwam, Jazera, Waislama, Afkarmedia, Muqowama, Abyan, Al Alaq, and Ziyad Visi.

under the right conditions and circumstances, could trigger a return to the type of chronic instability that characterized the national landscape during the dangerous transition to democracy between the late 1990s and early 2000s.

The Regional Dimension: Jemaah Islamiyah

Background

JI is an active jihadist terrorist group with purported historic links to al-Qaeda. The group currently enjoys a concerted presence in Indonesia and, to a lesser extent, the Philippines and is known to have had established cells in Malaysia and Singapore. It has also tried to entrench an operational and logistical foothold in both southern Thailand and Cambodia. The United States designated JI a foreign terrorist organization in October 2002, shortly after the first Bali attacks (discussed later). The group was subsequently added to the United Nations' (UN's) list of proscribed entities, a move that requires all member states to freeze its assets, deny it access to funding, and prevent its cadres from entering or traveling through their territories (Manyin et al., 2004, p. 5).¹

JI was established as a dedicated entity in January 1993, having been directly inspired by the militant breakaway wing of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt of the same name. The group itself formally came into being at Camp Saddah, the mujahidin training camp set up in Afghanistan by Abdul Rasul Sayyaf, a close confidant of Osama bin Laden. JI's actual genesis, however, is far more historical in nature, tracing a heritage to DI—a movement driven by theological, ethno-political, and economic imperatives that was established by Sekarmadji Maridjan Kartosuwirjo in the late 1940s. This latter organization was committed to the creation of a full-fledged Islamic state in Indonesia (the Negara Islam Indonesia) and consistently refused to recognize

¹ For more on the UN designation process, see Cronin, 2003.

the legitimacy of the secular-oriented Indonesian state following the transfer of sovereignty from the Dutch in December 1949. In pursuit of its objectives, DI launched a series of rebellions across Java, north Sumatra, and south Sulawesi during the 1950s that posed a direct and serious challenge to the ruling authority of the central government in Jakarta (Leifer, 1996, pp. 93–94; Abuza, 2005a, pp. 43 and 57, fn. 9; Schwarz, 1994, p. 169; ICG, 2005a, pp. 2–3).

Although the DI insurgency was effectively broken by 1962, the spirit of the group's identity was never fully expunged, and its ideas continued to resonate among certain extremist Islamic elements throughout the country. In 1972, two DI adherents, Abdullah Sungkar and Abu Bakar Bashir, set up Pesantren al-Mukmin, a boarding school based in Solo that was dedicated to the propagation of puritanical Islamist teachings. A year later, the facility relocated to the village of Ngruki and became known as Pondok Ngruki. Here, Bashir and Sungkar concentrated on building up small communities—*jemaah*—by working with even smaller study cells (known as *usroh*) of 8–15 members, each of whom swore an oath to separate themselves from all *kafir* institutions and follow a strict Salafi understanding of sharia law (ICG, 2002b, pp. 7–10; Suryhardy, 1982; Australian Government, 2004, pp. 43–44). It is in this context that the ICG observes,

It was a premise of the Darul Islam movement, later adopted by Abu Bakar Ba'aysir and his followers, that setting up a Jemaah Islamiyah was a necessary precursor to the establishment of an Islamic state. The various incarnations of Darul Islam saw the [creation] of small jemaah committed to living under Islamic law as an essential part of [this] overall strategy. (ICG, 2002b, p. 10)

During the mid-1970s, Bashir and Sungkar were drawn into open engagement with other radical Islamist elements through an elaborate sting operation concocted by President Soeharto's intelligence czar, Ali Murtopo. Duped into believing that their followers were needed to help battle a reemergent communist threat, the two Muslim clerics were linked to an illegal group known as Kommando Jihad and arrested in 1978. Although they were released on appeal several years later, subsequent plans to rearrest them caused both to flee to Malay-

sia in 1985, where, along with an inner core of Ngruki alums, they acted as a critical “way station” for Indonesians and other Southeast Asian Muslims en route to participate in the anti-Soviet mujahidin campaign in Afghanistan. This experience had a profound impact on Bashir and Sungkar, particularly in terms of directing their ideological orientation toward a more explicit regionwide outlook. During this period, Sungkar and Bashir began to argue for the establishment of a puritanical Islamic state in Indonesia as a stepping-stone toward the institution of a wider, pan-border “super state” for all Muslims. They specifically envisaged a caliphate (Daulah Islamiyah) that would integrate the Muslim-majority states of Indonesia, Malaysia, and Brunei, as well the southernmost areas of the Philippines and Thailand (Abuza, 2005a, p. 43; Manyin et al., 2004, p. 5; Singapore Ministry of Home Affairs, 2003, p. 6).

The collapse of the Soeharto regime in 1998 proved to be a significant boon to the budding JI network. Formerly restricted Islamic groups from across the political spectrum were suddenly allowed to operate freely. Bashir and Sungkar returned to their country of origin with their Ngruki comrades and openly espoused their pan-regional designs. Just as importantly, the inability of Jakarta to retain control over Indonesia’s outer islands led to the eruption of major Christian-Muslim clashes that, by the end of the 1990s, had plunged Maluku (Ambon) and Sulawesi (Poso) into what amounted to a full-scale sectarian civil war. This outbreak of ethnoreligious violence provided JI with an ideal operational environment to recruit fighters, gain battlefield experience, and consolidate the organization in preparation for its self-defined campaign of jihadist violence that was to literally “explode” across the Southeast Asian geopolitical landscape after 2000 (Manyin et al., 2004, p. 6).

Objectives

As noted, JI’s aims are essentially the same as those of DI but are shaped by a more explicit regional perspective and a stronger sense of

jihadist ideology.² The immediate goal is the Islamization of Indonesia, which is enshrined as a fundamental component of a broader ideological vision that views Daulah Islamiyah (an Islamic state) as the necessary catalyst for the restoration of Islamic governance across Southeast Asia (PUPJI, Chapter 5).

According to the group's manifesto, *Pedoman Umum Perjuangan Al-Jama'ah Al-Islamiyah* (general guidelines for the struggle of JI, referred to as PUPJI and written in the 1990s), such an outcome can be achieved only via a two-step process: first, to develop a puritanical organization whose members have a strong sense of religious, social, political, and (most importantly) military identity, and second, to use this group as a platform from which to launch armed jihad (*jihad musallah*) against "infidels, polytheists, apostates, atheists, and the [morally] corrupt" in order to create a theocratic, pan-regional caliphate (PUPJI, pp. 3, 37–44, and 51–52).³

To expedite this process, PUPJI affirms the need to establish a solid base (*qoi'dah sholabah*) by creating a cadre of followers who are steadfast in their obedience and totally committed to the movement's long-term objectives. It is these individuals—possessing the personal strengths of faith (*quwwatul aqidah*), brotherhood (*quwwatul ukhuwwah*), and fortitude (*quwwatul musallaha*)—who are intended to act as the "core executor, propagator and guardian of the *jama'ah*'s

² JI leaders have vastly different experiences and training compared to the DI commanders of the 1950s. Their time in Afghanistan and their links with mujahidin across the region and around the world have contributed to their understanding of and appreciation for global struggle. As a result, JI leaders have tended to be much more concerned than the founders of DI with striking out against both the near enemy, the national government (primarily the Indonesian government, but also the Philippine government, and, to the extent that it is possible, the governments of Singapore and Thailand), and the far enemy, Western powers.

³ PUPJI outlines 10 main theological principles, four of which are particularly pertinent to JI's ideological outlook:

4: return of the caliphate . . .

5: faith, migration, and jihad . . .

7: allegiance and nonallegiance . . .

10: Islam in totality (comments made during the U.S. Pacific Command Southeast

Asia Violent Ideology Strategy Seminar, San Antonio, Tex., October 31–November 1, 2006).

mission" (PUPJI, p. 28; see also Gunaratna, Pavlova, and Haniff, 2004, pp. iv–vi).

While acknowledging the importance of education and preaching, PUPJI considers the use of military force as essential to the fulfillment of the movement's strategic objectives. Reflecting the teachings of Abdullah Azzam and other prominent militant Salafi ideologues, PUPJI sees preemptive violent action as obligatory for all Muslims under the aegis of an armed mujahidin (Barton, 2008).

This vision has been blurred in recent years by growing disunity among the movement's ranks that has effectively split JI into two opposing factions: a pro-bombing group, which advocates "fast-tracking" the goal of a pan-regional Islamism by engaging in a sustained campaign of suicide bombings across Southeast Asia, and a more traditionalist bloc (known as the "bureaucrats"), which asserts that indiscriminate attacks are not sanctioned by PUPJI and that JI's end state can be brought about only by returning to the movement's DI roots and entrenching a more conservative religious order in Indonesia.⁴

Despite this rift, the general thrust of JI's ideological approach can still be summed as one that is aimed at Islamizing Indonesia in the expectation that this will positively alter the religious balance in Southeast Asia and ultimately foster the creation of a wider caliphate. The adoption of force is commonly viewed as an integral means of successfully achieving this outcome.⁵ Although differences of opinion exist over how quickly JI's end state can be achieved, the long-term goal of instituting a cross-border caliphate, as well as the emphasis on appropriately developing the resources and capabilities of JI cadres to engage in concerted armed violence, is largely shared by the movement's wider membership.

⁴ Comments made during the U.S. Pacific Command Southeast Asia Violent Ideology Strategy Seminar, San Antonio, Tex., October 31–November 1, 2006.

⁵ It should be noted that PUPJI affirms the necessity of giving prior warning to its enemies, who then have a choice to submit or die. The so-called JI bureaucrat mainstream argues that this negates the use of indiscriminate tactics of the sort employed by members of the pro-bombing faction (comments made during the U.S. Pacific Command Southeast Asia Violent Ideology Strategy Seminar, San Antonio, Tex., October 31–November 1, 2006).

Structure and Size

JI has been described as al-Qaeda's operational wing in Southeast Asia.⁶ However, this overstates the formality of the relationship between the two organizations. JI has developed as a distinct entity in its own right and, while it has certainly been prepared to accept al-Qaeda funding and technical expertise in the past, the group's organizational structure is one that has been specifically designed to further its own regional Islamist agenda.⁷

Initially, JI adopted a vertically integrated, networked character that was composed of several layers. At the helm of the structure was Sungkar, who acted as the preeminent emir of the movement. After he died in 1999, Bashir assumed exclusive responsibility for JI's spiritual and ideological development, remaining in this position until he was arrested on charges of treason in October 2002.⁸ It is believed that the post subsequently passed, first, to Abu Rusdan and *ustadz* Adung and then Yusron Mahmudi Zarkas (aka Zarkasih), who were arrested in 2003, 2004, and 2007, respectively (Barton, 2008; Fitzpatrick, 2007; Jha, 2007).

Beneath the emir was a regional advisory council (*majelis qiyadah*) that was headed by a central command (*qiyadah markaziyah*) and chaired, until his arrest in 2003, by Riduan Isamuddin (aka Hambali). Next came three mid-level councils that oversaw matters pertaining to religious and disciplinary affairs. The group was made up of four regional divisions, or *mantiqis*, that were subdivided into smaller operational companies (*khatibah*), platoons (*qirdas*), and squads (*fiah*) and

⁶ For more on the extent of al-Qaeda's reputed links with JI and other Islamist entities in Southeast Asia, see Abuza, 2003.

⁷ Comments made during the workshop Al-Qa'ida, the Next Four Years: A Critical Look at the Group's Status, Targeting, and Evolution, CENTRA Technology, Arlington Va., November 4, 2004.

⁸ Bashir has never been tried with any offenses specifically relating to the actual perpetration of terrorist attacks. At the time of this writing, he had been convicted only of criminal conspiracy, for which he received a sentence of 30 months (subsequently commuted to 20 months as a result of time served). Bashir was released from prison in June 2006 ("Indonesia: Radical Cleric to Be Freed," 2006).

defined along both geographic and functional lines (Abuza, 2005a, p. 44; Manyin et al., 2004, p. 7; ICG, 2002b, pp. 27–28). The *mantiqis* were organized as follows:

- Mantiqi I: Singapore, Malaysia (except Sabah), and southern Thailand; responsible for ensuring JI's economic wherewithal
- Mantiqi II: Indonesia (except Sulawesi and Kalimantan); responsible for leadership and recruitment
- Mantiqi III: Sabah, Sulawesi, Kalimantan, and the southern Philippines; responsible for training and weapon procurement
- Mantiqi IV: Australia and Papua New Guinea; responsible for fund-raising (Singapore Ministry of Home Affairs, 2003, p. 10; Australian Government, 2004, p. 50; Barton, 2008; International Center for Political Violence and Terrorism Research, undated).⁹

In practice, however, it appears that JI worked in a much less centralized fashion than this structure implies. As Manyin et al. (2004, p. 9) observe:

[The organization's] goal of developing indigenous jihadis [necessarily] meant that JI members often had to work with and/or create local groups outside its control. [As a result], it is often difficult to sort out the overlap among JI and other radical [entities]. Additionally, regional leaders appear to have had a fair amount of autonomy, and . . . many of the cells were compartmentalized from one another [for security purposes].

At its height in 1999–2000, JI was thought to have been able to count on a total membership of around 2,000 activists, plus a wider support pool of some 5,000 passive sympathizers who had graduated from the various Islamic boarding schools established under the group's auspices (ICG, 2007b, p. 13). Thanks to a concerted crackdown on the movement by regional police and intelligence forces over the past seven years, however, possibly as many as 300 individuals have since been

⁹ According to Barton (2008), Mantiqi IV was originally set up to recruit troops from Australia; after this failed, the prime purpose of the cell turned to fund-raising.

arrested or killed (Barton, 2008; Schmitt, 2008). Crucially, these “neutralizations” have extended to some of the movement’s most prominent and adept operational leaders and field commanders (see Table 5.1).

Table 5.1
High-Profile JI Neutralizations, 2001–2008

Name	Proficiency or Position
Riduan Isamuddin (aka Hambali)	Veteran of the anti-Soviet mujahidin campaign in Afghanistan and important link-man with al-Qaeda
Mohammed Iqbal bin Abdurrham (aka Abu Jibril)	Believed to have been the head of JI’s Malaysia cell and one of al-Qaeda’s main trainers in Southeast Asia
Fathur Rahman al-Ghozi	Leading demolition expert and head of training in Mindanao
Muklis Yunos	Key link-man between JI and Islamist entities in the southern Philippines
Mas Selamat Kastari ^a	Former head of JI’s Singapore cell
Azari Husin	Former engineer and one of JI’s top explosives experts who was particularly proficient in the construction of large-scale chlorate and nitrate bombs ^b
Yusron Mahmudi Zarkas (aka Zarkasih, aka Nuaim, aka Abu Irysad)	JI’s spiritual emir following the arrest of Abu Rusdan in 2003
Abu Dujana	Former personal secretary of Abu Bakar Bashir and reputedly JI’s top operational commander in central Poso
Faiz Fauzan	Associate of Mohammad Noordin Top and wanted for his suspected involvement in Bali II
Abdul Rohim	Alleged member of JI’s central board and believed to have replaced Zarkasih as spiritual emir following the latter’s arrest in 2007

^a Mas Selamat escaped from the Whitley Road detention center, where he was being held in Singapore, on February 27, 2008. At the time of this writing, he was the subject of an INTERPOL orange international arrest alert. For an overview of this episode and the possible implications of Selamat’s escape, see Raman, 2008.

^b According to comments made during the Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies conference Counteracting the Support Environment for Terrorism in the Asia-Pacific Region, Honolulu, Hawaii, January 31–February 2, 2006.

These losses have had a marked impact on JI's institutional makeup, with the movement now existing as a far "flatter" and more segmented entity. Mantiqi I and Mantiqi IV have both been fully dismantled, and Mantiqi III appears to have been folded into Mantiqi II and reconfigured around a new leadership body, the *markaz*, which oversees four basic areas: religious training, education, logistics, and military operations. These areas are subdivided into region-specific locales, known as *ishobas*, on the island of Java). In addition, there now appear to be just three distinct geographical commands for Indonesia—the west area, the east area, and Poso (Abuza, 2007d, pp. 2–3; ICG, 2007b, pp. 1–4; see also Jones, 2007, p. 23).¹⁰

That said, JI can still count on a cadre of at least 15 first-generation leaders who are at large (ICG, 2007b, p. 13; Abuza, 2007c, p. 2; Barton, 2008). It is these latter individuals who are thought to be at the forefront of the group's pro-bombing faction and its focus on attacks directed against both Western and (perceived) secular enemies in Southeast Asia.¹¹ Six in particular have attracted the attention of local and international law enforcement:

1. Mohammad Noordin Top, a former accountant who allegedly acted as JI's top recruiter and financier and in April 2005 claimed to be overseeing the operations of a hitherto unknown terrorist entity on the Malay archipelago known as the Tandzim Qoedatul Jihad Untuk Gugusan Kepulauan Melayu (al-Qaeda for the Malay Archipelago; see ICG, 2006, p. 14)¹²
2. Joko Pitono (aka Dulmatin), an alleged protégé of Azari Husin and experienced electronics engineer
3. Umar Patek, who is highly proficient in the manufacture of chemical-based explosives and who is wanted for his role in the 2005 Bali bombings

¹⁰ JI also has a Central Sumatra *wakala*, which is based in the small city of Pakan Baru; however, the overall strength of this subdivision is not known.

¹¹ Author interviews, Singapore, April 2005; see also Jones, 2007, p. 24.

¹² Top has also variously referred to his group as as *Anshar el-Muslimin* and *Thoifah Muqotilah*.

4. Hari Kuncoro, Dulmatin's brother-in-law
5. Zulkifi bin Hir (aka Marwan), who is presently thought to oversee all aspects of military ordnance for regional terrorist attacks
6. Aris Sumarsono (aka Zulkarnaen, aka Daud), who allegedly acts as al-Qaeda's current point-man in Southeast Asia and is thought to be commander of an "elite" JI squad (known as Laskar Khos) that helped carry out the 2002 Bali attack and the 2003 bombing of the JW Marriott.

Top and Zulkarnaen are believed to be hiding in Indonesia, while Dulmatin, Patek, Kuncoro, and bin Hir are all thought to be in the southern Philippines working with the ASG and, allegedly, renegade fronts of MILF.¹³

Operational Activities

As noted, JI exists as an unambiguously jihadist movement that is constructed along paramilitary lines and upholds the purported necessity (and religious legitimacy) of engaging in preemptive violence whenever tactically and strategically opportune (Barton, 2008). The group has, as a result, emphasized an active operational agenda that has involved political violence and terrorist attacks (planned and perpetrated) both within and beyond Indonesia.

Participation in Communal Violence in Maluku and Sulawesi

Much of JI's initial operational activity was aimed at fanning anti-Christian violence in Maluku and Sulawesi. The group worked primarily with other non-LJ jihadist organizations created to defend Muslim interests in this part of the Indonesian archipelago—notably Laskar Jundallah, KM, AMIN, and Ring Banten—operating under the collective banner of Laskar Mujahidin (LM; literally, mujahidin militia). By July 1999, there may have been as many as 500 LM members on

¹³ Author interviews, Zamboanga, January 2008; see also ICG, 2008b, pp. 3–10; Jones, 2007, p. 25; and Rewards for Justice, undated.

the ground in the central Maluku islands of Ceram, Saparua, Haruku, and Ambon. The bulk of these members were “deployed” for between six and 12 months and were organized into small groups of up to a dozen fighters who specialized in carrying out either precision or hit-and-run attacks against priests and Christian businessmen, community leaders, and churches. As the ICG notes, the range of weaponry available to these LM forces was considerable, extending from AK-47 assault rifles and antipersonnel mines to mortars, grenades, and Stinger 5s (ICG, 2002d, p. 19).

Many of those who became involved in violence in Maluku or Poso had no prior contact with JI or its partner organizations associated with LM. One of the key tools used to solicit these new members was propaganda video footage produced by Aris Mundandar, a Ngruki teacher and close aide of Abu Bakar Bashir. The exact method of inducting fighters varied according to the organization doing the recruiting and its location, but most inductees were first challenged to think about the suffering of their fellow co-religionists by being shown “documentaries” of the horrors of communal conflict in Maluku and Sulawesi. Typically, the person approached would be a student at an Islamic high school; after being exposed to graphic images of Christian violence and cruelty, potential recruits would then be invited to join a *halaqah*, or study circle, to discuss the plight of Muslims in eastern Indonesia. If these individuals showed sufficient interest, they would then be introduced to the key precepts of Salafi Islamist doctrine before finally being taught the importance of jihad—not merely as a spiritual metaphor but also as an actual and necessarily physical means to confront those oppressing the Muslim faith. In JI/LM circles, this entire process could take up to several months, and even once subsequent physical and military training had commenced, as much as one-third of a recruit’s time was still spent in ongoing religious instruction (ICG, 2002d, pp. 19–20).

Early Terrorist Activity: 2000–2001

Apart from participating in communal fighting, JI also carried out three significant terrorist strikes between 2000 and 2001. The first, which was executed in August 2000, involved the bombing and attempted

assassination of the Philippine ambassador to Indonesia—allegedly as a “thank-you” for being allowed to access MILF training camps in Mindanao (see Chapter Three).¹⁴ The second assault attributed to the group occurred on the night of December 24, 2000, when 38 churches were simultaneously targeted in 11 cities across the Indonesian archipelago.¹⁵ Known as the Christmas Eve bombings, the combined operation involved US\$47,000 worth of explosives (procured from the Philippines) and left 19 people dead and over 120 injured.

The final incident in this early spate of activity took place in August 2001, when the Atrium Mall in East Jakarta was bombed. Carried out by Taufik Abdul Halim (aka Dani), the attack was directed against a Christian group that met for church services on rented premises occupying the second floor of the Atrium complex (ICG, 2002d, p. 24).¹⁶ It later transpired that Taufik, who had fought with LM in Maluku, had been persuaded to carry out the attack by Abdul Aziz (aka Imam Samudra)—one of the main architects of the Bali October 2002 suicide strikes, which heralded the onset of JI’s most violent and destructive phase of terrorist violence.

Terrorist Activity: 2002–2005

As noted earlier, the most audacious and lethal strikes attributed to JI date from October 2002 (see Table 5.2). These operations, all of which demonstrated considerable skill in terms of bomb construction,¹⁷ pre-attack planning, and target surveillance, were justified mostly under

¹⁴ Two months later, JI was linked to a second attack, this time on the Jakarta Stock Exchange, which left 15 people dead. The case has never been fully uncovered, however, and the bombing is not now generally considered one of the group’s earlier operations.

¹⁵ The targeted cities included Jakarta, Bekasi, Bandung, Sukabumi, Ciamis, and Mojokerto in Java; Medan, Pematang, and Sinatar in Sumatra; and Mataram in Lombok.

¹⁶ Initially, it was thought that the intended target of the bombing was Megawati Sukarnoputri, who had recently been sworn in as the new Indonesian president after the national parliament passed a vote of no confidence against Abdurrahman Wahid.

¹⁷ The IEDs used in these attacks were typically in the order of >100 kilos and consisted of a mixture of ammonium nitrate, potassium chlorate, and diesel fuel, combined with a TNT booster charge (author interviews, Manila, January 2008).

Table 5.2
High-Profile Attacks Attributed to JI, 2002–2005

Attack	Deaths	Injuries
Bali bombings, October 12, 2002	202	209
Bombing of JW Marriott Hotel, Jakarta, August 5, 2003	12	150
Bombing of Australian Embassy, Jakarta, September 9, 2004	11	>200
Bombing of Philippine <i>SuperFerry 14</i> , February 27, 2004 ^a	116	—
Bali II bombings, October 1, 2005	25	129

^a As noted in Chapter Four, the attack on *SuperFerry 14* was actually a joint operation undertaken in conjunction with the ASG.

the twin umbrella of fighting the “far enemy” (the United States, its allies, and adherents to capitalist-led development) while fostering the supremacy of Islam across Southeast Asia. Although unquestionably spectacular, JI’s post-2002 activities generated considerable controversy within the movement. Not only did the bombings galvanize concerted CT action that led to the arrest of some 300 of the group’s members, many in the movement were highly uncomfortable with the large number of Muslim casualties that resulted from the blasts (something that was particularly true of the Marriott and Australian Embassy attacks in Jakarta). Strategically, the operations were also deemed counterproductive, not least because they directly contributed to increased pressure on Jakarta to crack down on JI’s main territorial base in Indonesia (see Chapter Eight).¹⁸

The net effect of these internal developments has been the fracturing of the organization into the aforementioned pro-bombing and traditionalist blocs, which has significantly reduced JI’s operational effectiveness. However, so long as the likes of Dulmatin, Patek, Marwan, Top, Zulkarnaen, and bin Hir remain at large, the possibility of large-scale, indiscriminate attacks and suicide bombings cannot be discounted.

¹⁸ Author interviews, intelligence officials and security analysts, Singapore, 2005; Barton, 2008; ICG, 2007b, p. 1; Fealy, 2008, p. 391.

JI Traction in Southeast Asia

As discussed in Chapter Three, JI has gained a certain degree of traction among militants in the southern Philippines and continues to enjoy a residual presence in the region. According to AFP sources, there are probably around 30 JI members scattered across Mindanao, the bulk of whom are believed to be in areas under the control of ASG or renegade MILF commands. Notably, these include leading pro-bombing elements, such as Patek and Dulmatin.¹⁹ Beyond this, however, there does not seem to be any great affinity for JI even among extremists, and the ties that do exist seem to reflect pragmatic self-interest and personal relationships rather than a passionate commitment to the idea of a pan-regional caliphate.

In southern Thailand, JI has little support, despite the increasingly violent and religious nature of the conflict. Extant local and rebel outlooks remain parochial and very much focused on defending the region's uniquely defined Malay Muslim identity.

Of the three critical states discussed in this monograph, Indonesia is undoubtedly the most vulnerable to JI's message, in part because of the ideological links with DI, which provides JI with a ready-made conduit through which to communicate its Islamist propaganda. This historical connection also finds resonance in the *raison d'être* of other Indonesia-based Islamist groups, notably Laskar Jundullah, AMIN, KM, and Ring Banten. Although originally set up to fight in defense of co-religionists in Maluku and Sulawesi, all of these organizations systematically came to broaden their operational and political agendas in line with JI's tripartite doctrine of *imam* (faith), *jemaah* (community), and *jihad* (holy war).²⁰ As noted in Chapter Four, however, it

¹⁹ Author interviews, Zamboanga, February 2008.

²⁰ As the ICG remarks,

No understanding of jihadism in Indonesia is possible without understanding the Darul Islam (DI) movement and its efforts to establish the Islamic State of Indonesia. . . . Over the last 55 years, that movement has produced splinters and offshoots that range from Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) to non-violent religious groups. . . . It is what ties JI to every other offshoot, including . . . AMIN, Ring Banten, [Laskar Jundullah, and KM]. (ICG, 2005a, pp. i, 31)

is only Ring Banten that has demonstrated any real readiness to support designs that go beyond the Islamization of Indonesia to champion the idea of a pan-regional caliphate. To this extent, therefore, the true appeal of JI's ideological message would seem limited, even among entities that advocate hard-line militant sentiments.

On a broader popular level, JI's resonance is even less apparent. This reflects attacks that have resulted in Muslim-heavy collateral damage as well as general apathy toward the idea of a wider Southeast Asian caliphate.

That said, one should not be overly sanguine about the complete absence of grassroots support for radical Islamic imperatives that JI could conceivably exploit for its own political purposes. In a 2007 survey conducted by the Center for the Study of Islam and Society (Pusat Pengkajian Islam dan Masyarakat), for instance, a third of respondents (33.3 percent) said that they were active members of a religious organization. Slightly more than half (53.1 percent) agreed with the statement, "People who take liberties when interpreting the *Qur'an* should be jailed," while 57.7 and 30 percent, respectively, indicated that they supported stoning to death and amputation as appropriate punishments for adulterers and convicted thieves (both of which are required by literalist interpretations of *hudud* ordinances as set out in sharia law) (PPIM, 2007, p. 12). When it came to their convictions about what Islam teaches with respect of the legitimate and proper use of violent means, nearly half of the respondents (49 percent) said that they agreed with the proposition that Muslims were obliged to wage war to protect their co-religionists from attacks and aggression perpetrated by non-Muslims. Just under one-third (32.8 percent) supported Islamist violence in Afghanistan and Iraq on this basis, and half of those retroactively justified the 9/11 suicide strikes in New York on the grounds that the (subsequent) U.S.-led GWOT represented an onslaught against Islamic culture and beliefs. More disturbingly, one in five (20.5 percent) of the respondents defended the Bali 2002 bombings as the legitimate destruction of a site of Western decadence, with a further 18.1 percent supporting the position that apostates and non-believers must be killed (PPIM, 2007, p. 10). Thus, a significant minor-

ity of Muslims can be expected to tacitly support the ideology, if not the actions, of groups like JI.

JI's Future Prospects

Despite the many setbacks that have befallen JI in recent years, it is clear that the group still retains the capacity to articulate a compelling narrative to its support base. Even if the name *Jemaah Islamiyah* disappears from public view, like that of DI before it, the fundamentalist vision that the organization promotes and embodies is likely to live on in some shape or form and is unlikely to fade away completely. Most JI militants (both at large and in prison) will remain deeply linked to the group's affiliated Islamist networks, working through these embedded social relationships to quietly nurture and foster the *jemaah* cause.

Traditionalists are likely to focus on rebuilding and consolidating rather than seeking to perpetrate large-scale attacks. Moreover, since peace agreements are now in place in both Maluku and Sulawesi (see Chapter Four), communal and political conditions are no longer conducive to promoting local anti-Christian jihad in eastern Indonesia. Given this situation, JI will probably reorient its attention toward promoting local *dakwah* initiatives. The principal aims will be to build pure Islamic communities as bases from which to prepare mujahidin for future battles and to fend off competition from outside Islamic groups, such as HTI (see, e.g., Jones, 2007, p. 22; Abuza, 2007c).

This consolidation phase is being supported by a new wave of jihadist publications and sophisticated Web sites that are aimed at both the Jakarta youth market and middle-class audiences. The central message of these publications appears to be the promotion of an Islamic caliphate under strict sharia law.²¹ As a recent ICG report has acknowledged, JI's current focus on the dissemination of information through a publication network is a direct effort to improve outreach and recruit-

²¹ Author interview, Adelaide, April 2008. Indicative of these publications is *Jihadmagz*, a magazine that caters to a relatively wealthy middle-class readership; covers conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Chechnya; and espouses radical anti-Western propaganda.

ment as a way of rebuilding the organization (ICG, 2008a, p. 14). It also provides an important source of terrorist financing through advertising revenue and the sale of videos and other materials.

The more radical pro-bombers, by contrast, will find it increasingly difficult to operate in any concerted manner—as a result of both unremitting CT action undertaken in the context of the continuing GWOT and popular rejection of indiscriminate tactics that negatively affect wider Muslim interests. However, the ability of these extremist elements to stage ad hoc, random bombings will be retained, especially as long as figures such as Dulmatin, Top, Patek and bin Hir remain at large. Most likely, they will choose attacks that are cheap, are easy to plan and manage, and can be readily executed by small cells (or even individuals) pulled together on short notice. Although largely illusory, such strikes would allow the pro-bombers to project an image of strength and create the impression of a formidable and highly capable organization.

Counterterrorism and National Security in Thailand

Historical and Political Context

The Thai state is highly nationalistic in character, paying scant regard to regional diversity or autonomy. There exists acute sensitivity on the part of the central government to any challenge that might threaten the territorial integrity of the country, with the preferred approach for dealing with potential centrifugal forces predicated on assimilation rather than accommodation.¹ This policy bias has shaped the central administration's approach to the Malay Muslim insurgency in three ways. First, there has been a general reluctance to negotiate on the issue of state unity and, rather, to seek a solution that adheres to the three pillars of Thai nation-building: *chat*, *sasana*, and *kasat*. Second, Bangkok has consistently defined the conflict in purely domestic terms and as one that can be effectively handled by its own security forces. Third (and very much related to the aforementioned point), the Thai state has categorically rejected any question of involving outside parties in the south, fearing that to do so would lead to a so-called “East Timor scenario,” in which the government is forced to accept a popular referendum on independence that leads to secession by default.²

Historically, this normative context translated into a policy framework that effectively ignored fostering (much less empowering)

¹ Author interviews, Bangkok and Pattani, September 2007.

² Prior to 2004 and the onset of the bloodiest stage of the southern insurgency, the Thai government also conceptualized Malay Muslim violence as a basic issue of law and order that could be addressed through the normal recourse to police and judicial channels.

regional identities but that has, instead, been anchored on absorbing local cultures, religions, and languages into the wider Thai-Buddhist polity. Dialogue, strategic communication, and other so-called “soft” policy initiatives have, as a result, not traditionally been emphasized in government-led efforts to address the conflict in the deep south, and the default position of successive administrations has been to define the conflict as one that directly pitches the destabilizing force of Malay ethnoreligious identity against the unifying ethos of Thai nationalism.

It is only since the bloodless coup d'état of September 2006 that an environment has opened for the institution of a more balanced CT strategy in the south. Critically, this episode provided an opportunity for the RTA—which had become increasingly vocal in questioning the utility of unidimensional, non-compromising responses to what was clearly a rapidly gathering militancy—to institute an overhauled policy agenda for the Malay Muslim border provinces. Specifically, the interim Council for National Security (CNS) that emerged under Surayud Chulanont with the endorsement of General Sonthi Boonyaratkalin (who orchestrated Thaksin's ouster) quickly signaled that it was prepared to adopt a different, more comprehensive approach to dealing with violence in the south. Two interrelated aspects were explicitly stressed as integral to this reoriented effort: (1) the need for a long-term strategy that combines hard and soft CT policies and (2) recognition that information operations can, in their various guises, play an instrumental role in promoting peace and stability (see Office of the Prime Minister of Thailand, 2006a). The general thrust of this more accommodating stance remains intact, notwithstanding the return to civilian rule in 2008.

Before going on to discuss and assess how this context has specifically played out in terms of the evolving dynamic of Thai CT in the south, an overview of the main security assets currently deployed to or in the region is in order.

Security Resources Deployed to the South

Responsibility for coordinating national security initiatives in southern Thailand falls to ISOC Region 4,³ which following the enactment of the Internal Security Act in 2007, reestablished the CPM and SBPAC as its respective military and socioeconomic development wings (which, as noted in Chapter Two, had both been dissolved by Thaksin in 2001).⁴ Currently, there are 40,000 professional personnel deployed under the ambit of ISOC's CPM, with 10,000 from the Royal Thai Police (RTP) and 30,000 from the RTA's 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th commands (who are rotated on an annual basis).⁵ In 2008, the newly created 15th Light Infantry Division was also set up; dedicated exclusively to security operations in the deep south, this unit will boost the number of troops deployed in the region by a further 4,000.⁶ Specialized squads currently active in the region include, from the RTP, the Police Special Task Force⁷ and the Border Patrol Police (which operationally falls under the army)⁸ and, from the RTA, detachments from the Special

³ The ISOC structure was originally set up to fight a communist insurgency in the 1960s and 1970s.

⁴ Author interviews, Bangkok, April 2008; see also Pathan, 2007a, and ICG, 2008c, p. 6. Prior to 2007, ISOC was run purely under the statutory authority of the RTA; the ISA for the first time established a legal framework for the institution of internal security policy in Thailand. (ISOC, as a national command, is responsible for the coordination of domestic security throughout the country.)

⁵ Author interviews, Bangkok, July 2008; see also ICG, 2008c, p. 6. RTA responsibility for security in the Malay provinces is divided as follows: 1st Army Command, Narathiwat; 2nd Army Command, Pattani; 3rd Army Command, Yala; 4th Army Command, the four Muslim districts of Songkhla (author interview, Bangkok, April 2008).

⁶ The 15th Light Infantry Division will act as a permanently deployed force for the southern border provinces. The unit was scheduled to be expanded to around 9,000 personnel by 2009 and will have one company of special forces permanently assigned to it (author interviews, Yala, September 2007).

⁷ The Police Special Task Force acts as a rough equivalent to U.S. special weapons and tactics (SWAT) teams and is mostly used to quell riots and break sieges.

⁸ The Border Patrol Police forces are primarily responsible for monitoring Thailand's northern and southern frontiers and is probably among the best trained (and toughest) of the police units currently deployed on an active basis. At the time of this writing, there were

Warfare Command Center and the Santhi Suk Force (which acts as a dedicated psychological operations unit).⁹

Both the army and police play a concerted role in the Malay provinces, undertaking a range of missions that extend from secure-and-clear operations to urban policing (including curfew enforcement and random vehicle searches), surveillance, frontier control, and (since 2008) counternarcotics.¹⁰ However, in terms of day-to-day security, it is local paramilitary and self-defense forces that bear the brunt of responsibility for CT and COIN efforts. Delegating duties to these units is seen to proffer four main advantages: First, it is a relatively inexpensive means of providing an extensive military presence in the Malay provinces; second, it relieves conventional RTA troops of front-line postings; third, it places responsibility for security in the hands of local recruits who are familiar with the local language, terrain, and culture; and fourth, it conceivably allows for the use of force that may be less inflammatory and escalatory in crisis situations (Ball, 2004, pp. 179, 188; ICG, 2007c, p. 7).

Thahan Phran (literally, hunter-soldiers) spearhead Bangkok's irregular force deployment in the south. Originally established in 1978 to clear communist guerrillas from mountain strongholds in the northeast of Thailand, 7,500 troops split into seven regiments have so far been activated in the south; the military intends to recruit an additional 28 companies of Thahan Phran, further expanding this overall comple-

eight Border Patrol Police companies, four full-time and four part-time, each composed of 200 personnel.

⁹ Author interviews, Yala, September 2007.

¹⁰ The growing problem of drug abuse has been evident in Yala, Narthiwat, and Pattani, and much of it currently involves the unregulated consumption of kratom tree leaves (*Mitragyna speciosa*, a psychoactive stimulant used for centuries in Southeast Asia) mixed with codeine-laced cough syrup. Authorities have become increasingly concerned that Malay Muslim rebels are now specifically exploiting local addiction to this cocktail to at least partly finance their insurgency. In April 2008, the Thai government announced plans for a "second war on drugs." (Prime Minister Thaksin initiated a first campaign in February 2003, which was directed against narcotics crossing into Thailand from Burma and, in its first three months, saw more than 2,500 traffickers killed.) A principal component of this initiative will be a focus on eradicating the illicit kratom trade in the southern border provinces (see A. Davis, 2008, p. 52).

ment to an expected 9,000 by 2009.¹¹ Troops are employed full time on a two-year contract¹² and paid 10,000 baht per month.¹³ Training, which falls under the responsibility of the RTA, lasts two months and covers basic combat skills, such as surveillance, on-ground monitoring, bomb disposal, marksmanship, intelligence collection, and escape and evasion. The primary role of the Thahan Phran is to serve as a border patrol and light screening force, allowing conventional RTA battalions to be kept as formed units to their rear (Ball, 2004, pp. 3–4). Operationally, the five regiments engage mainly in search-and-destroy missions, intelligence collection, and civic action programs.¹⁴ To facilitate this latter effort, the bulk of recruits (80 percent) are locals and, to the extent possible, equally drawn from the Buddhist and Muslim communities.¹⁵ As the commander of the 4th Thahan Phran Regiment in Pattani explained,

We specifically use locals that know and understand the Malay people and their culture and who are familiar with the surrounding territory in the southern border provinces; using locals in this way means that we do not have to start from scratch with new

¹¹ Author interviews, Yala and Pattani, September 2007; see also Ball, 2004, p. 5, and ICG, 2008c, p. 7. The motto of the Thahan Phran is “Chat, Sasana, Phra Maha Kasat lae Prachachon” (“Nation, Religion, and Citizens”)—an extension of the Thai mantra of *chat, sasana, kasat*.

¹² Thahan Phran can be no older than 30 on recruitment and are subject to a mandatory retirement age of 45.

¹³ This salary is actually higher than the one paid to a regular RTA trooper, but the latter receives more by way of supplementary benefits, such as housing in Army bases, health care, and assistance with school fees for children (Ball, 2004, p. 190).

¹⁴ Author interviews, Pattani, September 2007; Ball, 2004, pp. 101–103. Thahan Phran also undertake limited target-hardening duties, providing extra security for high-risk venues, such as schools. In addition, there is one dedicated female platoon that is employed to negotiate with women insurgents (who are frequently used to stir up protest crowds) as well as various civilian auxiliary units (known as *asa chuai rop thahan phran*, or *thahan phran* combat assistance volunteers) who assist mainline Thahan Phran regiments with intelligence collection and insurgent suppression.

¹⁵ Author interviews, Yala and Pattani, September 2007. It should be noted that, while 80 percent of Thahan Phran are local recruits, only between 15 and 30 percent are currently drawn from the Malay Muslim population (see ICG, 2008c, p. 7).

recruits. (Author interview, 4th Thahan Phran Regiment, Pattani, September 2007)

Supplementing the Thahan Phran are 2,200 full-time village defense units (known as *or sor*) and 67,400 part-time village defense volunteers (known as *chor ror bor*). The former fall under the authority of the interior ministry, though, like the Thahan Phran, they are trained by the Army. Recruits undergo a rudimentary program of defense and weapon instruction that lasts one to two months (followed by a refresher course at least once per year), are issued a government-supplied rifle, and receive a small monthly stipend. They serve mostly in a functional reserve capacity for the police and are typically used to protect buildings and local bureaucratic officials as well as to augment intelligence collection on the ground.¹⁶ *Chor ror bor* act as an auxiliary adjunct to the *or bor* and are principally intended to provide a cheap and expeditious means for increasing security around local schools, government offices, and community neighborhoods. The volunteers receive three days of training in shotgun handling and patrol practices (supplied by either the Army or *or sor* personnel) and are then organized into 30-person units that are equipped with a basic inventory of pistols and rifles. A communal interior ministry budget of 20,000 baht is also allocated to underwrite the expenses of all *chor ror bor* teams operating within each village jurisdiction (see Ball and Mathieson, 2007, pp. 260–264).

In addition to the Thahan Phran and self-defense militias, two other irregular units operate in the south. In October 2005, Queen Sirikit sponsored her own village-based initiative—the *or ror bor*. Consisting of volunteers, these individuals receive 12 to 15 days of intensive training from the RTA and are deemed to be generally more effective and disciplined than the *chor ror bor* who, as noted, undergo only a three-day program of instruction. The militia has so far deployed 9,541 members, split into nine companies equally based in Yala, Pattani, and Narathiwat (Ball and Mathieson, 2007, pp. 241, 261).¹⁷ That same year,

¹⁶ Author interview, Pattani, September 2007.

¹⁷ The queen also sponsored two 128-strong Iron Lady units in 2005, both of which have been praised for their skill and prowess with guns. It is reported that she would like to see

the so-called Teacher Protection Battalion was also established. This second force consists of teachers who are trained in sharpshooting and martial arts by the RTA. Each member is allowed to buy a 9-mm pistol for only 18,000 baht (which is far below the market price of 50,000 baht) that can be paid through an interest-free monthly installment scheme. An initial group of 360 teachers was trained in December 2005; by April 2006, an additional 1,080 members had been added to the battalion, and there were plans to expand total numbers to around 2,840 by 2009 (Ball and Mathieson, 2007, p. 267).

Key Counterterrorism Measures in the South

Thai CT and COIN in southern Thailand can be divided into two main phases: the predominantly militaristic response emphasized by the Thaksin administration and the institution of a more balanced and complex policy mix following the coup of September 2006.

The Thaksin Administration

For the most part, the preferred policy of the Thaksin administration was to confront Malay Muslim militants with directed force rather than try to seek a negotiated settlement through more nuanced, soft hearts-and-minds efforts. During his tenure as prime minister (2001–2006), Thaksin—who directly oversaw national security policymaking for much of the most violent phase of the terrorist insurgency—consistently rejected any notion of talking or dealing with rebel leaders and representatives. By contrast, he advocated an almost exclusively hard-line stance that was primarily based on flooding the south with army, police, paramilitary Thahan Phran, and irregular village self-defense militias.¹⁸

additional units deployed in the future, though at the time of this writing, no new teams had been created.

¹⁸ For detailed critiques of the main policy parameters and responses instituted by the Thaksin administration in the southern border provinces, see ICG, 2005b, Chapters 5–8, and HRW, 2007, Chapter 4.

In 2004, Thaksin endorsed the establishment of a forward headquarters¹⁹ for the 4th Army—which, prior to 2008, exercised exclusive responsibility for military security in the south—to help coordinate military operations throughout the southern border provinces.²⁰ That same year, he imposed martial law across Yala, Pattani, and Narathiwat, allowing troops to make arrests without a court warrant as well as extending their rights of search and preemptive detention (A. Davis, 2004a, p. 21). In addition, 3,600 members of the RTP were given dedicated training in small-team tactics, long-range reconnaissance, and siege tactics, extending their traditionally community-oriented defensive role to one that had a far more explicitly offensive character.²¹ Finally, dramatic expansions in the paramilitary and village self-defense programs took place, with these units increasingly bearing the brunt of security and related defense and offensive operations throughout the southern border provinces (Ball and Mathieson, 2007, pp. 239–240).

The effectiveness of Thaksin's military approach was greatly hindered by several interrelated factors. First, the government's response suffered from an extremely weak intelligence infrastructure. Symptomatic of a wider malaise in the Thai security community, the inability to first gather and then collate information into an actionable product reflected several institutional and personnel problems:

- a complete lack of trust both between and within police and military ranks, with interagency rivalries, jurisdictional conflicts, and data stovepiping as far more the rule than the exception
- the absence of a viable central mechanism to coordinate the intelligence activities of the numerous agencies on the ground
- insufficient training, particularly in analytical techniques

¹⁹ The forward headquarters came complete with five company-sized task forces backed by attack and transport helicopters.

²⁰ As noted, all of the RTA's commands now share responsibility for security in the south, a decision undertaken to increase the pool of military talent available for deployment to the Malay border provinces as well as to alleviate the overall burden on the 4th Command (author interviews, Bangkok, April 2008).

²¹ Author interviews, Pattani, September 2006; see also “Police in Southern Thailand Receive Counter-Insurgency Training,” 2006.

- inadequate linguistic preparation—very few Thai Buddhists posted to the south possessed even a basic (let alone working) knowledge of the Malay dialect (A. Davis, 2004a, pp. 24–25; ICG, 2005b, pp. 34–35; Raman, 2005).

Second, the hard military track was not accompanied by a softer, more nuanced policy line to win popular support. The Thai government made virtually no effort to address the general sense of alienation and injustice that fuels Malay Muslim discontent, paying scant regard for ethnoreligious and cultural initiatives that could build community trust. As one Western diplomat remarked at the time,

Bangkok does not appear to be overwhelmingly concerned with looking at new ways of solving the southern conflict, always defaulting to a position of brute force. [Measures] such as expanding Malay Muslim education in state-run schools remain at marginal levels while pledges to institute civic [infrastructure] and development projects have yet to be translated into meaningful action. (Author interview, Bangkok, September 2006)

Third, the security forces engaged in several actions that fundamentally destroyed their perceived legitimacy among the wider population. In the opinion of most local commentators, it was not so much that indigenous Malays actively supported the insurgents or shared their aspiration for an independent state; it was just that they feared and resented the police and military more.²² Two incidents in particular are universally recognized as having had an especially serious impact in terms of engendering negative public sentiments, both of which involved irregular forces. First was the April 2004 storming of the Kruse Se Mosque, which, as noted in Chapter Two, is one of the most revered Islamic religious sites in Southeast Asia. The Thahan Phran-led assault left an indelible mark on the local Muslim psyche, impressing a perception of the RTA as little more than an uncaring

²² Author interviews, Pattani and Bangkok, November 2005 and April and September 2006.

outside occupier.²³ Second was the highly brutal manner by which the police and military, backed by *or sor*, dealt with a Malay protest in the Tak Bai district of Narathiwat province seven months later. Not only was the crowd fired upon with live ammunition, some 1,300 demonstrators were subsequently rounded up and “stacked” in trucks up to five or six layers deep for transport to an RTA detention camp. By the time the vehicles arrived at their destination, 78 of the passengers had died of asphyxiation and several dozen others had broken or dislocated limbs or were suffering from serious dehydration (ICG, 2005b, pp. 27–29; “Death Toll ‘Could Be Far Higher,’” 2004; “C-in-C’s Olive Branch Anathema to CEO,” 2006).

Fourth, the decision to dismantle CPM 43 and SBPAC was disastrous because it essentially destroyed overnight the network of contacts and relationships that had been built up in the south. Not only did this negatively affect local intelligence collection, it also eradicated a potentially useful conduit for building trust, confidence, and understanding with the local population.²⁴

Finally, there was no strategic framework to guide the RTA and RTP and to ensure that their actions were instrumental in providing for the full stabilization of the south. In many ways, Thai authorities remained blind to the evolving nature of the Malay Muslim insurgency, believing only what they wanted to believe (namely, that the current crop of rebels was no different from those of the past) and conceiving of victory not so much in terms of true national reconciliation as of merely capping violence by returning to the status quo.²⁵ This attitude was perhaps best reflected in the following analogy given to a Western diplomat in Bangkok by a senior official serving in Pattani:

²³ Author interview, Pattani, September 2006; see also ICG, 2005b, pp. 26–27; and Amnesty International, 2004.

²⁴ Author interviews, Bangkok, July 2008; ICG, 2008c, p. 6. Several Western commentators believe that this particular legacy of the Thaksin administration will never be ameliorated, the reinstitution of CPM 43 and SBPAC in 2006 notwithstanding.

²⁵ Author interview, Thai police official, Pattani, September 2006.

I look at the deep south like an old broken-down car; while it can be fixed, it will still be an old car. Right now, all we are trying to do is to get the south back to where it was. This is not a fully stable region, but at least one that is functioning. (Relayed during author interview, Bangkok, September 2006)

The Post-September 2006 Situation

The military coup of September 2006 altered the political dynamic of Thai CT and COIN operations in the south. On assuming power as interim prime minister, General Surayud Chulanont made an unprecedented inaugural speech in which he explicitly affirmed that problems in the Malay border provinces “were primarily rooted in [the region’s] lack of justice.”²⁶ The CNS government subsequently embarked on a new set of initiatives that combined three main strategic strands: (1) peace-building and reconciliation, (2) security (split 50/50 between hard and soft approaches), and (3) dialogue. These tracts were, and continue to be, coordinated under the auspices of ISOC 4. As noted earlier, ISOC 4, which is responsible for the coordination and execution of security policy throughout all 14 provinces of southern Thailand, is composed of two main wings: a military wing (CPM) and a socioeconomic wing (SBPAC).²⁷

At the time of this writing, this broad-based policy mix and structure remained in place. Indeed, in February 2008, the then-new prime minister, Samak Sundaravej, delegated all responsibility for security policy in the south to the RTA commander-in-chief, General Abupong Paochinda, who has specifically stated his intention to continue with the more nuanced approach initiated by the CNS.²⁸

²⁶ The remarks were aired during a special broadcast on Thai TV Channel 11 televising the inaugural speech, October 1, 2006; see also HRW, 2007, p. 41.

²⁷ Author interviews, Bangkok, April 2008.

²⁸ Author interview, Bangkok, April and July 2008. Most Western observers believe that the new government, headed by the People’s Power Party, was more interested in consolidating its power in Bangkok than comprehensively engaging the Malay Muslim insurgency, and the decision to delegate the Army as principally responsible for overseeing security policy in the south reflected this predilection (author interviews, Western government officials, Bangkok, April 2008; see also ICG, 2008c, p. 6).

Peace-Building and Reconciliation

The socioeconomic strand of the post-2006 strategy has been coordinated through SBPAC, which is staffed by 200 officials who aim to build solid relationships with the local population, in line with the King's philosophy of "sufficiency economy." The essential objective of this paradigm is

to reach out to the [Malay] and develop [their] area . . . using the principle of inclusive [civic] participation to . . . promote sustainable development . . . and create awareness of the need for people to live together in harmony, based on the diversity of thoughts, ways of life and cultures. (Office of the Prime Minister of Thailand, 2006a)

A number of specific measures have been highlighted by the Office of the Prime Minister as integral to this effort:

- eliminating the causes and conditions that give rise to the sense of alienation and inequality among the Malay people by treating them in such a manner that they feel that they can live in Thailand with dignity and in accordance with their own ways of life, societies, religions, and cultures
- accelerating the development of education at all levels, in line with local ways of life and culture, providing the opportunity for religious leaders and scholars to give advice on matters relating to the administration of education
- improving the Malay people's standard of living and employment prospects by emphasizing projects that are based on the use of local resources and that reflect the ethnocultural needs of the indigenous population²⁹
- pursuing human resources and social development based on the diversity of ways of life and culture by supporting inter-religious exchanges, emphasizing correct understanding of religious prin-

²⁹ Three priority areas have been specified as integral to this effort: (1) expanding the opportunities for those in the lowest income bracket, (2) developing agriculture, and (3) fostering micro-business development (author interviews, Bangkok, April 2008).

ciples, promoting exchanges of experiences in the diversity of life-styles and cultures among different groups in society, strengthening the role of family and community, and engaging people with different opinions in the building of peace in society.³⁰

Thus far, the main emphasis has been on promoting economic development, fostering educational and goodwill programs, and initiating measures to deal with social ills. To this end, an ad hoc Special Economic Development Zone (SEDZ) was established in January 2007. Funded with an initial budget of 20 million baht, this area will coordinate infrastructure projects throughout the three Malay provinces (approved under a so-called “happy living” policy designed to improve the quality of life in the deep south)³¹ and is tied to the wider Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle that aims to promote cross-border trade and investment between each of the three participating states.³² Integral to the mechanics of the SEDZ is a so-called Development and Peace Unit (Nuay Pattana Santi), which is responsible for disbursing funds to consolidate control of former insurgent “red-zone” villages. Ostensibly falling under the control of the military but operating through SBPAC, the unit allocates up to 1 million baht (approximately US\$29,700) to finance economic, infrastructure, and employment projects in all towns and hamlets that have been cleared of insurgent forces. Subsequent initiatives are identified and staffed by the local population itself (ICG, 2008c, p. 7).

On the educational/goodwill front, a sustained effort is under way to promote quality and diversity in the curriculum of local *pondoks* (which is seen as critical in ensuring that these institutions are not abused for indoctrination purposes) as well as to attract Muslims to state-run institutions by offering more religious courses taught in the local Malay dialect and expanding the number of scholarships and

³⁰ Author interviews, Bangkok, April 2008.

³¹ At the time of this writing, most of these projects were being directed toward agricultural development with the assistance of some 300 volunteer Thahan Phran.

³² Author interviews, Bangkok, September 2007; see also Pakkawan, Harai, and Benjakat, 2008.

quotas for studying in other parts of Thailand. Finally, the CNS started to fund extended home-stays for teenagers from Yala, Pattani, and Narathiwat, allowing them to come and experience life in major metropolitan centers, such as Bangkok.³³ The present Thai government has continued with this practice, viewing it as integral to exposing Malay Muslims to the “virtues and positives” of the Thai state.³⁴

Socially, the main emphasis is on dealing with a growing substance abuse problem in the south, which currently revolves around the illicit consumption of a highly psychotropic cocktail of crushed kratom leaf and codeine-laced cough syrup (see footnote 10 on page 108). Although the Thai government certainly regards dealing with this problem as a necessary security imperative—largely due to the fear that rebels are exploiting local addiction habits to help bankroll their insurgency—authorities remain highly cognizant of the need to ensure that a traditionally distrustful local population sincerely believes that Bangkok is actively prepared to tackle a major public health malaise. In the words of one senior official, “We do not want Muslim people complaining that the government is doing nothing” (quoted in A. Davis, 2008, p. 52).

Security

The basic thrust of the security component of the post-2006 strategy is to improve the combat efficiency and professionalism of deployed military/paramilitary and police assets while at the same time working to improve popular confidence in their ability to safeguard local Malay interests. RTA special forces units are now routinely used to hone the skills and abilities of the Thahan Phran, particularly in terms of search-and-destroy missions, as well as to ensure that these regiments are fully cognizant of legitimate rules of engagement. Moves have also been made to improve the overall standards of training and recruitment for self-defense village militias, many of which acted as nothing more than glorified thugs under the Thaksin administration. At the law enforcement level, efforts are under way to enhance police surveillance and

³³ Author interviews, Bangkok, September 2007.

³⁴ Author interviews, Bangkok, April 2008.

countersurveillance techniques, address internal corruption and abuse of power,³⁵ and improve what, hitherto, have been exceptionally poor forensics and investigation capabilities.³⁶ Reflecting the seriousness of the latter problem, between 2004 and 2006, a mere 40 cases involving suspected militants in the south were brought before the courts; of these, only three resulted in conviction and concomitant jail times.³⁷

A notable feature of the security strategy (and one conspicuously absent from the 2001–2006 period) has been the building of trust within the Malay Muslim community, both by increasing the transparency and accountability of the RTP/RTA and by attempting to undo the damage wrought by past mistakes (such as the Krue Se Mosque and Tak Bai incidents) through a dedicated hearts-and-minds campaign.³⁸ To this end, the government has bestowed SBPAC with the responsibility to ensure that all security actions are undertaken strictly in accordance with the rule of law, sanctioning it with explicit authority to hear and adjudicate complaints emanating from the local population concerning alleged abuses perpetrated by the security forces and civilian administrators. Grievances are aired before and adjudicated by a dedicated Justice Maintenance Center (Soon Damrong Tham), which works in conjunction with a 12-member committee that is responsible for examining requests to transfer misbehaving officials out of the border provinces (ICG, 2008c, p. 9).³⁹ CPM 43 also plays a dedicated role in fostering civil-military relations, both by facilitating common understandings of the nature and purpose of operations aimed at safeguarding communal interests and by promoting greater

³⁵ At the time of this writing, seven senior police and army officers were on trial for violating the rights of detained civilians. This is the first time that ranking officials in the RTA and RTP had been charged with (and forced to answer) accusations of such offenses (author interview, Bangkok, April 2008).

³⁶ Author interviews, Bangkok, September 2007.

³⁷ Author interview, Bangkok, September 2007.

³⁸ Author interviews, Bangkok, April 2008.

³⁹ The committee was established in April 2008, is co-chaired by the respective heads of SBPAC and CPM, and includes two ranking military officials, a senior police officer, three additional SBPAC representatives, two religious delegates (one Muslim, one Buddhist), and a legal expert.

cultural awareness and sensitivity among army and law enforcement personnel deployed to the south (Office of the Prime Minister of Thailand, 2006a, 2006b). Buttressing these efforts, the RTA is now actively working with Muslim leaders and representatives to put out a message that peaceful coexistence is possible and that the Thai state does not represent a threat to the Malay way of life. Much of this endeavor involves the dispatch of small psychological operations teams from the Santhi Suk Force to work with village leaders to improve overall standards of living and organize structures for protecting the local population from terrorist attacks and intimidation.⁴⁰

Dialogue

While the traditional emphasis on Thai nationalism and assimilation remains very much in evidence, there has been a far more active effort to foster ethnoreligious reconciliation and understanding through dialogue than was apparent under the Thaksin administration. Indeed, soon after assuming his position as interim prime minister, Surayud Chulanont issued an unprecedented public apology to the assembly of Malay Muslims in Pattani and, along with General Sonthi, explicitly affirmed that Bangkok was ready to engage in exploratory talks with militant leaders and representatives. The CNS government subsequently moved to jump-start bilateral discussions with long-standing groups, such as PULO, BRN, and GMIP, using representatives based in Malaysia and Europe to facilitate these engagements.⁴¹ These talks, which have been continued by the present government, appear to be aimed at resuscitating the Langkawi Dialogue that was first initiated in 2005 and culminated with the signing of an MoU that stressed the rebels' acceptance of Thai territorial integrity, the need for reconciliation, and the government's recognition of the need to provide greater cultural space and economic investment in the south.⁴²

⁴⁰ Author interview, Bangkok, September 2007.

⁴¹ While PULO, BRN, and GMIP have no formal organizational relationship with the current generation of militants, they are thought to enjoy residual links and contacts.

⁴² Author interviews, Bangkok, September 2007 and April 2008; see also ICG, 2008c, p. 10, and 2007a. The Langkawi MoU was nullified in 2006 largely due to a failure on the

Apart from negotiations, the CNS and subsequent civilian administrations have recognized the potential utility of psychological operations and international propaganda in their respective COIN and CT approaches. According to the Office of the Prime Minister, a critical aspect of stabilizing the southern border provinces necessarily requires increasing “channels of communication with groups having different views and pursuing violence . . . by communicating with the target groups at all levels but with unity” (Office of the Prime Minister of Thailand, 2006a). As noted previously, a key component of the RTA’s hearts-and-minds campaign has involved the dispatch of small Santhi Suk Force units that work with local village leaders to help build popular trust and confidence in the state’s security policies and measures.⁴³

In addition, three so-called “rehabilitation camps” were set up in Ranong, Chumphon, and Surat Thani (all of which are outside the southern Malay provinces). These facilities, which fell under RTA authority and have since been shut down (as discussed later), were used to “positively” sway and rehabilitate Malays suspected of engaging in or otherwise supporting militant violence. Identified individuals were given the choice of either having their case heard through the criminal legal system or voluntarily enrolling in one of the three camps to undergo a four-month vocational training program. In addition to practical skills, those sent to the holding centers were also exposed to information sessions that focused on Thai nation-building (through such activities as singing the national anthem and pledging honor and loyalty to the royal family), dispelling anti-Buddhist conspiracy theories, delegitimizing jihadist exonerations of defensive violence, and “correcting” distorted versions of Malay history and culture. Prior to being closed, nearly 400 insurgent suspects had passed through the three camps and received some sort of reeducation training.⁴⁴

The main thrust of international propaganda efforts has been forging understanding and cooperation with prominent Muslim inter-

part of the Thaksin administration to follow up on its pledged commitments.

⁴³ Author interview, RTA officials, Bangkok and Camp Siridhorn, Yala, September 2007.

⁴⁴ Author interviews, Pattani and Yala, September 2007, and Bangkok, July 2008; ICG, 2008c, p. 13.

national organizations and states. The ministry of foreign affairs has spearheaded these efforts, actively reaching out to the OIC and influential neighboring countries, such as Malaysia and Indonesia, to explain its policies in the southern border provinces and to impress that these in no way constitute a threat to the region's unique ethnoreligious identity.⁴⁵ Similar efforts have been made with Middle Eastern and South Asian governments. Between April and July 2007, for instance, the foreign minister engaged in a particularly intensive program of shuttle diplomacy, visiting Pakistan, Egypt, Sudan, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates specifically to discuss the evolving situation in southern Thailand (Thailand Ministry of Foreign Affairs, undated[b]).

Assessment

To a certain extent, the CT and COIN responses instituted by Bangkok post-September 2006 have started to pay dividends. The police have made some improvements in terms of forensic/post-blast investigations,⁴⁶ and the Thahan Phran have begun to exhibit a greater capacity for conducting effective small-group disruptive operations. Equally, individual members of the security forces are now more aware of human rights and cognizant of the need to adhere to and respect standardized rules of engagement in nonconventional combat settings.⁴⁷ Arguably more importantly, local Malays appear to be viewing the security forces—regular and irregular—in a far more positive light, perhaps best reflected by their increased willingness to pass on intelligence about the movements and identities of militants.⁴⁸ Between

⁴⁵ Author interviews, Bangkok, September 2007.

⁴⁶ Much of the credit for these improvements is owed to training modules imparted through the forensics institute, which is attached to the interior ministry.

⁴⁷ Author interview, Bangkok, September 2007 and July 2008.

⁴⁸ It should be noted that part of the increased willingness to work with the authorities also stems from local frustration over militant attacks against teachers, which have essentially clearly affected the educational system in the south. For Malay parents, being able to send their children to a Thai school is better than not being able to send them to any school at all (author interview, Bangkok, July 2008).

June and September 2007, for instance, more than 300 terrorists were arrested by the authorities—many of whom were apprehended as a direct result of community-sourced information.⁴⁹

Village-based tribunals are also helping to discredit militant propaganda of a repressive, uncaring Thai state, while SBPAC's Justice Maintenance Center has offered an established conduit for the indigenous population to air its grievances.⁵⁰ Moreover, bureaucrats and military and law enforcement personnel dispatched to the south are now exhibiting a somewhat better understanding of the unique ethno-religious makeup of the Malay border provinces, benefiting from the civic-interaction programs instituted through SBPAC and CPM 43.⁵¹ In the words of one seasoned commentator on Thai military affairs,

The RTA has demonstrated enough professionalism to recognize and learn from their past mistakes. This is reflected in the manner by which they are currently addressing the situation in the south, with greater acceptance of the need for increased cultural awareness and the institution of more flexible policies [and mechanisms] aimed at addressing underlying sources of grievance in the region. (Author interviews, Bangkok, September 2007)

Finally, contemporary Thai efforts in Yala, Pattani, and Narathiwat have been officially recognized in international circles. Malaysia and Indonesia have both endorsed the current policy mix as appropriate and as a welcome step in the right direction. Equally, during a visit to the border provinces in April 2007, the secretary general of the OIC explicitly endorsed the government's reconciliation policy, pledging to

⁴⁹ Author interviews, Bangkok and Pattani, September 2007, and Bangkok, July 2008. As one well-informed commentator observed, the police and military are now able to go after specific, identified individuals rather than just entering a village "blind" and arresting those who appear suspicious.

⁵⁰ Between October 2006 and July 2008, the center received 375 complaints that included a broad spectrum of allegations ranging from corruption, intimidation of villagers, and unjustified arrests and detentions of insurgent suspects to smuggling of contraband, drug trafficking, and sexual misconduct (ICG, 2008c, p. 9).

⁵¹ Author interviews, Bangkok, September 2007.

support a solution predicated on “full respect for [the] sovereignty and territorial integrity of Thailand.”⁵²

That said, numerous weaknesses continue to beset Bangkok’s security response in the south. The police, having yet to demonstrate a proficient forensics capability, tend to rely more on confessions (which are often unsubstantiated and, hence, inherently unreliable) than on material or physical proof to secure convictions. Moreover, the RTP has singularly failed to develop viable techniques for securing crime scenes⁵³ or working with the media, while age-old issues of corruption, jurisdictional competition, and interagency confusion all remain very much in evidence.⁵⁴

Compounding the situation is a lack of resources. The salary for a police major is a mere 14,000 baht per month, while officers deployed to the south receive only 4,000 baht in additional hazardous pay. These income scales not only feed a lack of morale, they also offer little incentive to attract and retain committed, high-level recruits. As one Western analyst somewhat cynically remarked, “If you pay peanuts, you end up with monkeys.”⁵⁵ Besides performance, low pay has directly encouraged high levels of corruption among the police. There have been numerous cases of senior officers turning a blind eye to the activities of criminal syndicates for a share of their profits, accepting straight bribes to secure the release of detainees, and artificially inflating militant attack statistics to access “pork-barrel” funds appropriated from the national security budget.⁵⁶ Indeed, institutional graft is so endemic

⁵² Author interviews, Bangkok, September 2007; Thailand Ministry of Foreign Affairs, undated(a), undated(b).

⁵³ Commenting on this failing, one Western diplomatic representative remarked, “Generally, when a secondary IED is detonated to trap emergency responders attending to a primary explosion, the individual triggering the device is standing in the surrounding crowd of onlookers. This could be prevented simply by fully clearing and sealing off the area where the first blast occurred” (author interview, Bangkok, September 2007).

⁵⁴ Author interviews, Bangkok, September 2007 and July 2008.

⁵⁵ Author interviews, Bangkok, July 2008. According to one analyst, those who do sign up for the police are attracted largely by the openings this avails for corruption.

⁵⁶ Author interviews, Bangkok, September 2007. Critics have long claimed that the security forces have been prepared to “play up” the situation in the south, viewing the region as the

that it has made the RTP one of the least respected of all of Thailand's public services—reflected in the popular nickname for law enforcement: land sharks.⁵⁷

In addition, significant gaps persist in terms of intelligence—the increased willingness of locals to work with the authorities notwithstanding. Not only are collection efforts proceeding in the absence of either a medium- or long-term strategic plan,⁵⁸ insufficient focus is being paid to surveillance at the subdistrict level, which is at odds with the village-based structure of the current militancy. Information also continues to be jealously guarded—both within and between agencies—with chronic stovepiping serving to hinder the rapid dissemination of actionable intelligence. Underscoring these problems is a dearth of analysts adequately trained in critical thinking or capable of producing accurate and timely threat assessments.⁵⁹

Negotiations and development-based approaches have also largely failed to make any effective inroads against the actual perpetration of political violence in southern Thailand. Attacks now occur on an almost daily basis; the number of people killed or injured in bombings, arson, and shootings continues to rise; highly brutal assaults, such as beheadings and live burnings, are becoming increasingly common; and the BRN-K has steadfastly refused to engage the Thai state in any form of official interlocution, dismissing the willingness of such groups as PULO to do so as a wholesale betrayal of legitimate Malay Muslim

last great frontier for attracting government national defense resources. Bangkok's military budget currently stands at 143 billion baht (US\$4.2 billion), compared to roughly 80 billion baht (US\$3.4 billion) in a year when militant attack levels were comparatively low. As the ICG notes, "The operation to quell the insurgency has become a lucrative enterprise" (ICG, 2008c, p. 6; see also IISS, 2008a, p. 368).

⁵⁷ Author interviews, Bangkok, July 2008.

⁵⁸ According to one commentator in Bangkok, this reflects the short-mindedness of RTA commanders-in-chief. Every general who assumes the post comes in with one overriding objective—to end the insurgency on his watch. There is, in other words, no long-term perspective on how to end the conflict, nor is there any real will to comprehensively address the underlying grievances that have fueled the Malay Muslim struggle for the past five decades (author interview, Bangkok, July 2008).

⁵⁹ Author interviews, Bangkok, September 2007, April 2008, and July 2008.

aspirations.⁶⁰ Five factors would seem to have salience in accounting for this general failing. First, the Thai government has incorrectly assumed that granting greater economic space (through development and employment initiatives) is the best way to win over rebel forces and their wider passive support base. The issue is not about economics, however, as the Malay struggle (past and present) has always centered on the question of dignity and justice. Empowerment of local Muslims—culturally, politically, and religiously—is thus key. Problematically, however, this runs directly counter to the fundamentals of Thai-Buddhist nation-building.⁶¹

Second, even assuming that economics could significantly blunt violence in Yala, Pattani, and Narathiwat, pledges to lift the three provinces' overall social and development situation have generally not been followed through. Apart from the aforementioned SEDZ initiative, very little has actually been achieved in terms of promoting growth, infrastructure, employment, or business opportunity, and the government has failed make significant progress on substantive issues, such as education and language policy.⁶² As one well-informed journalist in Bangkok observes, this failure would seem to reflect a policymaker mindset that remains essentially blind to comprehensively addressing the needs of the Malay Muslim minority:

It is all basically rhetoric. No one in Bangkok cares about the south. There is no commitment to concerted development autonomy of the kind that would decisively expand the economic con-

⁶⁰ In July 2008, three self-professed militants claiming to represent a rebel umbrella organization called the All Underground Insurgents Group aired a video in Germany asserting that the insurgency was over. The announcement was immediately discounted by the military and analysts, however, and was later repudiated by the BRN-K (author interview, Bangkok, July 2008; ICG, 2008c, p. 11).

⁶¹ Author interviews, Bangkok and Pattani, September 2007, and Bangkok, July 2008.

⁶² Author interviews, Bangkok, July 2008; ICG, 2008c, p. 7. Educational reform has been particularly wanting, with most Malay Muslims continuing to view state-run schools as vehicles for assimilation and indoctrination of “Thainess.”

dition of the deep south. Whatever Bangkok is doing is too little, too late. (Author interview, Bangkok, April 2008)⁶³

Third, while Bangkok has stressed that it is committed to a more conciliatory approach, the government frequently defaults to a hard-line stance. Martial law and a so-called emergency decree⁶⁴ are both in force in the south. Combined, these measures grant more power to the security forces than either would alone by effectively sanctioning a “seven + 30 formula”: Insurgent suspects are first arrested under martial law and held for a week; once this period expires, the emergency decree is activated to prolong their detention by an additional 30 days.⁶⁵ Both provisions were used extensively between July 2007 and April 2008, when RTA special forces carried mass sweeps of various towns and villages suspected of harboring militants. Although these legally based operations undoubtedly did constrain militant movement in the short term—attack levels dropped 50 percent during the first five months of 2008, with only 19 people killed in May 2008 (compared to 101 the year before)—there is a real danger that, over the longer term, they could play directly into insurgent hands by fostering an increasingly divided and angry local population.⁶⁶ Equally, the potentially useful rehabilitation institutions noted earlier were all shut down in 2008 following a court ruling that local Muslims were not only being sent to the three camps against their will but that, once there, were also exposed to procedures that had little if anything to do with vocational training.⁶⁷ The security forces have also been periodically implicated in abuses of

⁶³ Western officials tend to agree with this assessment, with several questioning the extent to which the Thai government is genuinely interested “in emotionally owning what is going on in the south” (author interviews, Bangkok, July 2008).

⁶⁴ This is officially known as the Executive Decree on Public Administration in Emergency Situations.

⁶⁵ Suspects arrested under the two laws can be held incommunicado for 10 days (which heightens the risk that they will be subjected to torture or other mistreatment) and can be denied access to lawyers for the entire detention period (ICG, 2008c, p. 13).

⁶⁶ Author interviews, Bangkok, April 2008 and July 2008; see also ICG, 2008c, p. 7, and Pathan, 2007b.

⁶⁷ Author interviews, Bangkok, April 2008.

the sort that can only undermine credibility in their stated claim to be working for the interests of the indigenous population,⁶⁸ and there has, as yet, been no concerted move to prosecute any senior officials for the multiple Muslim deaths arising out of the infamous Krue Se Mosque and Tak Bai incidents in 2004 (ICG, 2008c, p. 11).

Fourth, the Thai government has not countenanced (or at least not supported) the establishment of an indigenous NGO presence in the Malay border provinces. This is problematic because it effectively means that there is no trusted third party that can be leveraged to help bring the rebels and government together or broker negotiations between them. Western officials maintain that, until an objective mediator is in place, it will be extremely difficult for dialogue-based approaches to make any meaningful headway in addressing ongoing violence and militancy in the south.⁶⁹

Fifth, the government has expended little effort exploring possible political solutions to the conflict in the south.⁷⁰ In February 2008, for instance, when interior minister Chalerm Yoobamrung suggested that special administrative zones in other countries could be examined as possible models for devolving power to the Malay Muslim provinces, he was quickly “slapped down” by Prime Minister Samak, who said that there should be no public discussion of this sensitive issue (see “Chalerm Proposes Special Administrative Zone,” 2008, and “Samak Cool to Autonomy Idea,” 2008). Bangkok has also largely ignored calls from Malay Muslims for greater representation in the regional administra-

⁶⁸ One notable and widely publicized case occurred in February 2008, when an imam suspected of being an insurgent ideologue was arrested and then fatally beaten in front of his son. The killing followed the release of three Muslim Student Federation of Thailand members—all of whom claimed that they were systematically subjected to physical abuse while incarcerated. In the words of one Thai journalist, the two incidents “made a mockery of any claim that the RTA is now prepared to pursue a ‘softly, softly’ approach to domestic security in the south” (author interview, Bangkok, April 2008).

⁶⁹ Author interviews, Bangkok, July 2008.

⁷⁰ It should be noted that the Thai cabinet did agree in June 2008 to study the peace process in Aceh as a possible template for resolving the conflict in the Malay Muslim provinces. However, the Samak government never moved to follow up on this resolution, much less translate it into any meaningful policy direction. Details of the cabinet agreement can be found on the Web site of the Royal Thai Government (undated).

tive structure and continues to reject any idea of allowing provincial governors—who are appointed—to be directly elected in popular elections. Commenting on this reticent stance, the ICG concludes, “There is no indication that the government is seriously considering granting [any degree of genuine] autonomy. The political elite tend to dismiss any such proposal as a first step towards independence, making it hard to explore alternative forms of administration” (ICG, 2008c, p. 11).

Underscoring all of these problems, the various tools that Bangkok is currently bringing to bear on the conflict in southern Thailand—hard and soft—are still not tied to a wider campaign plan that is outlined in a single strategy document and sets out and prioritizes the national security policies for the country as a whole. This gap essentially reflects the failure, thus far, to formulate and pass an integrated internal security act that takes into account the interests and objectives of those agencies and departments charged with ensuring and consolidating Thai domestic stability.⁷¹ In the opinion of several Western observers, this legislative void is indicative of a military bureaucracy, which, while increasingly receptive to a more flexible COIN and CT approach, remains unwilling to relinquish its dominating role in the formulation of Thai national security planning and policymaking.⁷²

⁷¹ Author interviews, RTA officials and Western diplomatic and military officials, Bangkok, September 2007.

⁷² Author interviews, Western diplomatic and military officials, Bangkok, September 2007.

Counterterrorism and National Security in the Philippines

Historical and Political Context

The Philippines has been fighting communist and Moro rebels for more than three decades and, before that, successfully overcame the earlier Hukbalahap insurgency (fought between 1946 and 1955). As discussed in Chapter Three, the various militant threats that Manila confronts have some similar motivational sources, but they differ in very significant ways. This complex conflict environment necessarily calls for a multipronged and diversified CT approach that is specifically tailored to address individual organizations and associated threat contingencies.

The common source for many of the violent substate groups that have challenged the central authority of the Manila government are the structural weaknesses inherent in the Philippine polity and the enabling conditions that they create for these entities to emerge and persist. Notable in this regard is the inability of the state to project an effective presence throughout large parts of the country; a corrupt and ineffective law enforcement structure that has bred a culture of private justice (*ridos*); an unstable political system that not only oscillates between authoritarian and weak democratic regimes but also experiences frequent attempted military uprisings and demands for “people’s power”; economic underperformance relative to other Southeast Asian countries and an attendant lack of employment opportunities; and sharp income disparities compounded by severe socioeconomic inequities, particularly in the countryside. While these various conditions lie at the root of both the communist and Moro insurgencies, the

particular manner by which these struggles have evolved has dictated a nuanced strategy that has spanned the spectrum of peace negotiations to full armed offensives undertaken in both a COIN and CT context.

Currently, in its relations with MILF, the Philippine government insists on the primacy of negotiations, which, as noted in Chapter Three, have made progress, albeit halting, since 2003 (the continued unsettled issue of ancestral domain notwithstanding). In a March 2007 statement, President Gloria Arroyo mandated the AFP to

work closely with the established mechanisms of the peace process—the joint ceasefire committees, the Ad Hoc Joint Action Group¹ . . . and the Malaysian-led [international monitoring team]—to keep combatants in place; and increase vigilance against those intent at breaking the peace, at agitating the people, at pitting government against MILF and communities and against each other. (Vitug, 2007)

To put this directive into effect, the government subsequently issued the “Reminders and Additional Guidelines on the Primacy of the GRP-MILF Peace Process” to define and frame the army’s operational conduct with respect to its interactions with MILF. The following key points were highlighted in the document:

- The operational mode of the AFP is one of active defense—meaning that the conduct or threat to use force, hot pursuits, and authorized preemptive strikes can be undertaken only in self-defense and in protection of civilians and vital installations.
- The PNP is the lead agency in confronting criminal syndicates, including militant “lost commands.” The AFP assumes a supporting role only.

¹ The Ad Hoc Joint Action Group provides a mechanism for MILF to report on terrorist groups and criminal organizations suspected of hiding in areas under its control. It was formally established in January 2005 and has since been an integral component of the peace process with MILF (the ad hoc group’s mandate was renewed on November 14, 2007). For additional details, see ICG, 2008b, pp. 10–12.

- AFP commanders have the responsibility to ensure the safety and secure passage of all accredited MILF members.
- At all times, AFP commanders need to be aware of the strategic implications of their tactical operations on the ground. In cases of doubt, they are obliged to “seek clearance first from higher commanders before initiating any military actions” (Vitug, 2007).

Hopes that a final settlement would be reached with MILF received a considerable fillip in 2008 when the GRP and MILF’s leadership concluded an agreement on ancestral domain, the MoA-AD. Expectations were quickly dashed, however, after the supreme court ruled that the government could not legally sign the document on the grounds that it was incompatible with the country’s constitution (see Chapter Three). Although this has significantly set back the overall peace process, Manila insists that it remains committed to a negotiatory tract and, indeed, at the time of this writing had announced a new paradigm focused on a broader set of “authentic dialogues with [all] communities and stakeholders” in the Muslim south (Quilop, 2008, p. 24).²

In contrast to MILF, Manila considers both the ASG and MBG to be terrorist groups that fall outside the parameters of either talks or a more concerted peace process. The main focus of the campaign against these two groups has been on hard security offensives backed up with measures designed to undermine their popular support base. Many of these initiatives are undertaken with U.S. support and assistance instituted under the auspices of the Joint U.S. Military Assistance Group–Philippines (JUSMAG-P). Washington has deployed more than 500 personnel to the Philippines as part of this mission, including experts from the U.S. Special Forces, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Central Intelligence Agency, and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) (Schmitt, 2008; ICG, 2008b, p. 22).

Although the Philippine government has been prepared to negotiate with CPP-NPA, talks were suspended in 2004 after the communists broke off contact with Manila in protest against being included on the

² The new policy directive was formally initiated by the Local Peace and Security Assembly held on the Zamboanga Peninsula on September 17–18, 2008.

U.S. and EU lists of proscribed terrorist organizations (see Chapter Three). The CPP-NPA has categorically stated that it will not resume any form of bilateral interaction with the government until its designation in United States and Europe is lifted—a decision that the Arroyo administration has little ability (or, indeed, inclination) to influence.

Currently, the AFP's main objective is to achieve a strategic victory over the communists by 2010, the year in which President Arroyo's term expires. Orchestrated under Bantay Laya I and II (Guard Freedom I and II), this goal has as its aim a 75-percent reduction in present CPP-NPA strength, capability, and influence by meeting the following self-imposed annual benchmarks: (1) the collapse of 65 guerrilla fronts between 2008 and 2010 (35 in 2008, 21 in 2009, and 19 in 2010); (2) the completion of 500 Kalayaan Barangay Program projects (*barangay* “freedom” projects);³ (3) the systematic intensification of “white area” operations over the next three years to neutralize the communist urban command structure “in key sectoral organizations providing support to the armed struggle” (churches, youth groups, labor unions, student bodies); and (4) the implementation of four major highway initiatives in Mindanao by the end of 2010.⁴

Resources Allocated to Internal Security

The AFP comprises 66,000 active-duty personnel in the army, 24,000 in the navy (including 7,500 marines), and 16,000 in the air force. In addition, there are 40,500 police (PNP) and 62,000 auxiliary personnel in 73 provincial commands. The security forces are organized geographically into six unified area commands, in addition to a dedicated detachment responsible for the capital region (IISS, 2008a,

³ These development efforts are designed to win over local sentiment through the construction of houses, schools, and clinics and the provision of basic community services, such as water and electricity.

⁴ Benchmarks presented at an AFP intelligence briefing, Camp Aguinaldo, Manila, January 2008. The four highway projects include a circumferential road for Basilan, the triple SB coastal road for Zamboanga del Norte, three circumferential highways for Cotabato City, and a Lapinig-to-Jipadad road in Sampar.

pp. 399–400). The fight against the NPA, which the government considers to be the main internal threat to the country, is the primary focus of four of these commands: the Northern Luzon Command, with headquarters in Tarlac; the Southern Luzon Command, based in Camp Nakar, Quezon province; the Central Command in the Visayas; and the Western Command, based on Palawan island, which is also concerned with external defense (looking outward to the South China Sea).⁵ The two remaining commands are in Mindanao: The East Mindanao Command, with headquarters in Davao, is focused mainly (but not exclusively) on the communist insurgency, and the West Mindanao Command, based in Zamboanga, is largely concerned with the Moro insurgency.⁶

The Scout Rangers, known officially as the 1st Scout Ranger Regiment, constitute a central element of the Philippine special forces. The division was originally established in 1950 to fight the Hukbalahap guerrillas and has since developed considerable experience and expertise in small-unit unconventional combat operations. The Scout Rangers number about 2,500 and are organized in four battalions in 20 companies deployed in all regions of the country.⁷

Complementing the Scout Rangers are the AFP Special Forces, the Light Reaction Companies, and the Naval Special Operations Group—all of which are heavily involved in CT and psychological and information warfare work. AFP Special Forces trainers were also instrumental in establishing the Civilian Armed Forces Geographical Units, which are paramilitary units composed largely of volunteer reservists organized into companies of 88 personnel that are handled by a squad of regular troops responsible for providing guidance and control. Members undergo a basic 30-day training program that focuses on firearms and small-unit tactics; receive free health care, an initial clothing

⁵ Author interviews, Singapore, April 2008.

⁶ Author interviews, Singapore, April 2008. It should be noted there is a sizable CPP-NPA presence on the Zamboanga Peninsula, the mitigation of which falls primarily to the 101st and 102nd Army Infantry Brigades, respectively based in Zamboanga del Sur and Zamboanga del Norte.

⁷ Author interviews, Zamboanga and Cotabato City, January 2008.

allowance, and a small stipend of 2,700 pesos per month; are armed with M16s, M14s, and carbines; remain subject to military law and regulations; and must wear uniforms.⁸ Currently, the Civilian Home Defense Forces constitute an important auxiliary force that is being used primarily against the CPP-NPA.

To combat the ASG, the AFP has primarily relied on the marines, organized as part of Joint Task Force Comet based in Sulu (another joint task force—Thunder, based in Basilan—was recently disbanded) (“Task Force Comet’s ‘Humanitarian Assault’ in Sulu,” 2008). The corps presently has a brigade stationed in Basilan and two brigades in Sulu (“AFP Trims Force Pursuing Abu Sayyaf in Basilan,” 2008).⁹

The marines, together with other relevant units of the Scout Rangers, AFP Special Forces, Light Reaction Companies, and Naval Special Operations Groups that have been deployed to Mindanao to fight the ASG, are currently receiving comprehensive training from U.S. CT advisers. Undertaken as part of JUSMAG-P’s Joint Special Operations Task Force—Philippines, modules focus on operations intelligence fusion, unit interoperability, logistics, and aspects of engineering, equipment, and maintenance. Although U.S. troops are barred from actually engaging in active hostile actions (which is prohibited under the Philippines constitution), they do participate in annual CT exercises with the AFP to test and audit imparted techniques, tactics, and procedures. Known as Balikatan (shoulder-to-shoulder), these drills have been ongoing since 2002.¹⁰ The most recent round, which

⁸ AFP intelligence briefing, Camp Aguinaldo, Manila, January 2008.

⁹ The army’s 105th Infantry Brigade was pulled out of Basilan at the beginning of 2008 and redeployed to another area in Mindanao. Two army battalions remain in Sulu as part of Task Force Comet.

¹⁰ The Asia-Pacific Area Network Web site, which is sponsored by U.S. Pacific Command, describes Balikatan as “an annual Republic of the Philippines and U.S. bilateral combined exercise” that is “structured to further develop the Armed Forces of the Philippines in crisis action planning, enhancing its ability to effectively conduct counterterrorism operations, and promote interoperability between participating countries” (Balikatan, undated).

took place in March–April 2008, was devoted exclusively to CMOs in Basilan, Tawi-Tawi, and Sulu.¹¹

Currently, the Philippine government is engaged in a process of defense reform and rationalization. Manila's Department of National Defense is looking across doctrine, force structure, training, and equipment to redirect defense forecasting and mapping in accordance with a multiyear capabilities planning system—a long-range scheme developed with U.S. assistance and divided into six three-year segments. The overall goal is to shift national security policy from traditional, threat-based planning and input-driven budgeting to a framework that is more strategic in nature, with capability and performance being the primary factors for respectively determining defense formulation and financing. The initial program development phase has been completed and the program is now being implemented through a Philippine Defense Reform program board and office that have been established specifically for this purpose.¹²

Key COIN and Counterterrorism Measures

The Philippine National Internal Security Plan (NISP) prioritizes the country's domestic security prerogatives in the following order: (1) COIN (primarily directed against the NPA); (2) counterseparatism (addressing MILF and rogue elements of the MNLF); (3) CT, both against international and local terrorist groups (namely, al-Qaeda, JI, and ASG); and (4) counterdestabilization, which involves neutralizing efforts to overthrow the government. The most developed of the four NISP components is COIN, which absorbs 60 percent of the government resources devoted to internal security (compared to

¹¹ Author interviews, Zamboanga, January 2008; Schmitt, 2008. Balikatan 08 exercised eight medical civic action programs involving 20 personnel per project and four engineering civic action programs involving 20 personnel per project.

¹² Information presented at AFP intelligence briefing, Camp Aguinaldo, Manila, January 2008.

15 percent each for CT and counterseparatism and 10 percent for counterdestabilization).¹³

In the COIN area, the GRP has developed a holistic approach that involves “five offensives and three programs.” The five offensives are as follows:

1. a military offensive, which is aimed at degrading the operational capabilities of the NPA
2. a legal offensive, which is aimed at securing convictions of violent militants by educating the AFP on appropriate procedures for securing crime scenes and ensuring the integrity of forensic evidence
3. an economic offensive, which is focused on cutting the flow of funds to the NPA from sympathizers abroad and upgrading the effectiveness of anti-money-laundering operations
4. a political offensive, which is directed at weaning local community organizations away from the CPP-NPA
5. a strategic communication/psychological operations offensive, which is aimed at delegitimizing CPP-NPA propaganda and promoting the Philippine state as a socially caring polity.¹⁴

The three programs are as follows:

1. an amnesty program, which applies only to the NPA and is currently being debated in the Philippine Congress
2. a social reintegration program, which focuses on the demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration of “repentant” NPA cadres and falls under the responsibility of the Office of the Advisor for the Peace Process
3. a human rights program, which is directed toward the PNP and AFP and is intended to boost the proficiency of police and army human rights awareness and understanding.¹⁵

¹³ Author interview, Manila, January 2008.

¹⁴ Author interview, Manila, January 2008.

¹⁵ Author interview, Manila, January 2008.

In addition to these offensives and programs, the Arroyo administration has instituted Local Peace and Security Assemblies (LPSAs). These gatherings bring together local government officials, civic leaders, and military and police officials to discuss the problems of insurgency and craft action agendas for particular areas. The Philippine government sees the LPSAs as a mechanism to begin the process of normalization in areas affected by insurgency as well as a means through which to reach out to NPA militants who have indicated an interest in reintegration into society. Five LPSAs were held in five separate regions in 2007.¹⁶

Combined, Manila's holistic COIN approach is aimed at the "normalization" of (former) hostile communist insurgent areas. The soft programmatic/LPSA components of the strategy are generally initiated once AFP offensives have reduced the NPA threat to manageable levels. While 100-percent stabilization has been achieved in several areas—for example, Bojol in the Visayas Region 7¹⁷—in most places the NISP remains in either a full-offensive or mixed offensive/normalization mode.¹⁸

An analogous NPA-style approach (taking into account the differences in the government's stance toward communist COIN and Moro counterseparatism) is now being extended to MILF. In Central Mindanao, the main strategy has been to work within the established mechanisms of the Coordinating Committees for the Cessation of Hostilities to forge informal AFP-MILF contacts and thereby help to prevent conflicts from breaking out or escalating. While the AFP certainly does place a premium on these types of confidence-building measures, it continues to view its broad security mission vis-à-vis MILF more as a matter of "active defense." Part of the reason for this is lingering suspicion that renegade lost commands from the group have no

¹⁶ Author interview, Manila, January 2008.

¹⁷ Bojol is frequently showcased as a model of successful COIN in the Philippines. Formerly a significant NPA stronghold, it has now been fully cleared of communist influence and is enjoying a major (and lucrative) tourism resurgence.

¹⁸ Author interview, Manila, January 2008.

interest in peace and may even be harboring and training JI and ASG terrorists in bomb-making techniques (see Chapter Three).¹⁹

AFP commanders increasingly understand that the inappropriate involvement of national-level security forces in local disputes can act as a trigger for violence. As one AFP commander explained it, “A party to a land or political dispute could call on associates in the local police or government-sanctioned militias to support him while an MILF commander might support or lend arms to the other party; very quickly, what began as a local dispute escalates into a national-level conflict.”²⁰ To prevent entanglement in local disputes, the AFP in Central Mindanao has arranged for a series of conflict-management seminars conducted by a Cotabato-based NGO to help military personnel understand the local environment and avoid becoming involved in conflict-prone situations.²¹ AFP officers have also worked closely with development NGOs and participated in such programs as the Bridging Leadership Fellowship program run by the Asian Institute of Management, which aims to develop leaders who can resolve societal divides by including legitimate stakeholders in decisionmaking processes (Bridging Leadership Fellowship Program, undated).

The aforementioned Balikatan exercises on Basilan island have had an important impact on AFP thinking regarding COIN and CT. In particular, the experience underscored to participating officers that development assistance often goes hand in hand with military operations, especially in terms of the potential favorable impact on the attitudes of the local population through road building and other construction work. Opening a dialogue with local stakeholders also appears to have exposed the AFP to an alternative means of at least trying to change local perceptions on the ground (Bridging Leadership Fellowship Program, undated).

The hearts-and-minds approach has gained increased currency among the highest levels of the AFP. According to the head of an NGO in the southern Philippines, this is now the preferred approach of several

¹⁹ Author interview, Cotabato City, January 2008.

²⁰ Author interview, Cotabato City, January 2008.

²¹ Author interview, Cotabato City, January 2008.

senior commanders deployed to Mindanao.²² Moreover, the military has now created a new division that is specifically dedicated to CMO efforts—the National Development Support Command. The rationale behind the unit is that the best way to defeat a terrorist insurgency is to provide people with what the rebels cannot: roads, bridges, businesses, houses, schools, electricity, medical centers, and medicines—in short, better governance.²³

That said, the GRP continues to emphasize a very militaristic approach with regard to the ASG and MBG, involving concerted U.S.-assisted CT sweeps across the Sulu archipelago. Although there have been moves to institute softer hearts-and-minds efforts to undermine the popular support base of the two groups, the essential thrust has been and continues to be offensive in nature. Very much indicative of this approach was Oplan Ultimatum, a nine-month campaign initiated in August 2006 to eradicate an estimated 500 ASG rebels and a smaller number of foreign “high-value targets” (principally Patek and Dulmatin) in Sulu. The operation was executed by a 10-battalion Philippine task force (supported in a noncombat role by a 200-strong U.S. military contingent) and had, by March 2007, led to the neutralization of 79 militants and the capture of another 28 (ICG, 2008b, pp. 12–15).²⁴ AFP officials have confirmed that they remain committed to Ultimatum-type offensives, which they believe could result in a 50-percent reduction in ASG (and MBG) strength over the short to medium term.²⁵

Assessment

Philippine COIN and CT efforts have yielded some important results. Measures directed against the CPP-NPA have certainly borne divi-

²² Author interview, Cotabato City, January 2008.

²³ Author interview, Manila, January 2008.

²⁴ These gains came at the expense of 28 AFP dead and 123 wounded. Overall, the extended operation was estimated to have reduced ASG manpower by 20 percent.

²⁵ Author interviews, Manila and Zamboanga, January 2008; see also Schmitt, 2008.

dends in terms of reducing the scope of the armed communist terrorist insurgency. As noted in Chapter Three, the NPA currently numbers only around 5,760 active members, a substantial decline from its high point in the 1980s. In addition, the AFP neutralized 13 key CPP leaders in 2007,²⁶ charged another 191 members with rebellion (which represented nearly a third of intended targets), and successfully cleared and consolidated 13 NPA guerrilla fronts. Efforts against the ASG have been similarly successful, with the group now reduced to around 100 hard-core fighters scattered in small pockets across Jolo, Tawi-Tawi, and parts of Basilan island. In common with the CPP-NPA, several high-value ASG targets have also been eliminated in recent years. Notable in this regard have been Khaddafi Janjalani, Abu Soliaman, Jundam Jamalul (aka Black Killer), Borhan Mundus, Abdullah Abas, Jamal Taib, Abdul Yebnon, Binang Sali (aka Sali), Muskin Ahaddin (aka Hussein), Ibrahim (aka Muskin), Gufran (aka Abu Samar), and Abdul Sakandal (aka Boy Negro)—all of whom were on Manila's list of most wanted.²⁷

Equally, the peace process with MILF, while halting and still far from consolidated, has nevertheless brought about a reduction in the overall level of Muslim-related violence in the south. Certainly, there have been no pitched battles of the type seen between 2000 and 2003, when major AFP offensives overran MILF's Camp Abu Bakar and Buliok complex (see Chapter Two). Moreover, Murad has stressed that he has not only restrained all the rebels commanders who were at the forefront of the violence that flared following the annulment of the MoA-AD in August 2008, but that active steps were also being taken to fully investigate the incidents and ensure that they would not be repeated (Quilip, 2008, p. 23). Commenting on the generally

²⁶ These included Elizabeth Principe (member of the Central Committee) and the following 12 senior secretaries: Emerterio Abtalan, Domingo Almusura, Recto Golimilm, Bienvenido Paladin, Reynaldo Rabulan, Zacarias Nobis, Antonio Ramos, Paterno Opo, Roberto Gacuma, Erwin Muli, Cindulla Yursua, and Rudy Pallado.

²⁷ Author interviews, Manila, January 2008. This high rate of captures also arguably reflects the success of the U.S.-funded Rewards for Justice Program, which provides financial incentives for the public to work voluntarily with the authorities and supply information that is relevant to the movement and whereabouts of high-value targets.

improved climate in Mindanao, one senior MILF official specifically remarked that AFP efforts had brought some level of stability to his area of responsibility and that this had to be both acknowledged and accepted.²⁸

On an organizational level, there are also signs that defense reform within the AFP is being institutionalized and is taking on the type of self-sustaining character that is necessary for achieving long-term, systemic change. The central government has committed 300 billion pesos of its own funds over 15 years to further the process of internal security capability building (these monies will frontload priority requirements for national defense over the next six years) and in 2005 drafted its first ever formal plan for guiding future defense asset procurement to meet the gamut of domestic challenges specified in the NISP.²⁹ Moreover, steps are now being taken to root out corruption and inculcate an ethos of military professionalization through the development of internal auditing programs aimed at identifying and disciplining officers and soldiers implicated in human rights abuses, graft, embezzlement, and other questionable practices (Chalk, 2008).

Notwithstanding these operational successes and the wider conceptual breakthroughs registered in the government's thinking about CT and COIN over the past two to three years, some important gaps remain in Manila's capabilities. First, the integrated approach to stabilization that underscores the strategic campaign against the NPA assumes that the army will take and hold a given area and that the civilian agencies will then go in to reestablish an effective state presence. In reality, however, zones cleared by the military are frequently infiltrated by militants, largely because civil authorities fail to discharge their responsibilities in a meaningful and decisive manner. This has generated particular consternation on the part of the AFP, which repeatedly charges that inadequate follow-on consolidation by local bureaucrats and administrators merely serves to create governance vacuums on

²⁸ Author interview, Cotabato City, January 2008.

²⁹ Author interviews, Manila, January 2008.

which insurgents and terrorists have been quick to capitalize.³⁰ In the words of one AFP officer with extensive experience battling the NPA:

One of the main weaknesses of the government's COIN strategy is the inability to consolidate control over held areas. Typically, once a region is cleared, the army will depart and hand over responsibility to local civilian agencies and bureaucrats. In most cases, however, these personnel have been incapable of preventing reinfiltration by communist operatives. Indeed, in a number of cases, guerrillas are known to have tactically withdrawn from base fronts, knowing that once they do so, the military will leave, effectively leaving them free to reestablish control. (Author interview, Manila, January 2008)

Second, efforts to implement a consistent national security strategy have been hampered by discontinuities in policies from administration to administration, as well as frequent changes in the upper management structures of law enforcement. Elections in the Philippines are typically highly adversarial, meaning that a new government will seldom continue the policies of its predecessor.³¹ In addition, according to Australian Federal Police liaison officers stationed in Manila, dramatic changes in organizational priorities, agendas, and directions in the PNP invariably accompany the appointment of a new director general, who will likely be rotated out of office in nine to 12 months.³²

Third, there has been a dearth of adequate coordination between the PNP and AFP, especially in terms of preserving physical evidence at crime scenes. Generally, it is the military that is the first to respond to a terrorist incident, given its resources and ability to rapidly deploy. This not only fails to square with the 2007 "Reminders and Additional Guidelines on the Primacy of the GRP-MILF Peace Process"

³⁰ Author interview, Manila, January 2008.

³¹ According to one senior official on the Philippine National Security Council, this is negatively impacting on policies for dealing with turned or surrendered NPA guerrillas, many of whom routinely fail to be properly rehabilitated into mainstream society and, hence, often return to arms (author interview, Manila, January 2008).

³² Author interview, Manila, January 2008.

(discussed earlier), it also gives lead responsibility to an organization that is neither trained in law enforcement nor attuned to protocols for collecting information that can be used for judicial purposes (the priority being on garnering tactical and strategic intelligence). Conviction rates have, as a result, been low, generally equating to less than a third of the cases brought forward for prosecution.³³

Fourth (and compounding the previously discussed problems), PNP investigative capabilities are weak, especially in terms of forensics. The police tend to rely on human sources and confessions to support prosecutions. Because these are often extracted under questionable circumstances—defendants frequently claim that they were made to sign statements under duress—they rarely lead to convictions, and cases are simply thrown out of court for lack of admissible evidence. This is particularly true for violent crimes, including terrorism.³⁴

Fifth, there are serious shortfalls in the legal tools available for combating terrorism. Democratic sensibilities and memories of abuses under the Marcos dictatorship meant that, for many years, the Philippines lacked any form of dedicated CT legislation. In 2007, the government sought to address this gap by passing the Human Security Act, which provides a statutory basis for defining and proscribing terrorist acts and underwrites a range of extrajudicial surveillance and arrest powers for the police.³⁵ Problematically, however, the act imposes extremely severe penalties in the event that it is judged to have been employed inappropriately and, as a result, the PNP had, at the time of this writing, yet to utilize the law.³⁶ By contrast, arresting officers con-

³³ Author interviews, Manila, January 2008.

³⁴ Author interviews, Manila, January 2008.

³⁵ The Human Security Act provides the government with an explicit authority to imprison all persons who commit an act punishable under the provisions of the Revised Penal Code if the purpose is explicitly designed to sow and create “a condition of widespread and extraordinary fear and panic among the populace in order to coerce the government to give into an unlawful demand” (Congress of the Philippines, 2007).

³⁶ Penalties for unauthorized, malicious, or inappropriate use of the Human Security Act include both imprisonment (up to a maximum of 12 years) and financial compensation. In the latter case, any individual who is charged with a terrorist offense and then acquitted has the legal right to demand 500,000 pesos (US\$125) compensation for each day that he or she

tinue to charge suspects under the standard legal code—with offenses that are eligible for bail and generally carry a far more lenient sentence than a terrorism-related crime would. Although the government has declared that is moving to modify and “balance” the more prohibitive provisions of the 2007 Human Security Act, most informed commentators do not believe that the present political climate (which is highly charged over alleged abuses of power during the Arroyo administration) is conducive to change of this sort.³⁷

Sixth, although there has been a significant shift in AFP culture toward greater validation of nonkinetic means of countering insurgency and terrorism,³⁸ the overall tempo of security reform continues to be held hostage by a degree of organizational inflexibility. One area in which this has been especially evident is the failure thus far to either integrate peace-building modules into the military curriculum or incorporate metrics into the promotion system that explicitly reward these types of activities.³⁹

Seventh, there are major shortfalls in surveillance and response capabilities, particularly with regard to coastal surveillance and interdiction. The ASG continues to move around the Sulu archipelago with impunity, typically traveling in powerful speedboats equipped with four 250- to 300-horsepower outboard engines that easily outrun naval interdiction patrols. The security forces similarly lack a concerted means to monitor the Liguasan marshlands of Maguindanao, an area used extensively by terrorists. While efforts are being instituted to address these gaps through the establishment of the Coast Watch South initiative (which is being financed primarily on the back of U.S. 1207 funds,

was held—the cost of which is personally borne by the arresting officer (author interview, Manila, January 2008).

³⁷ Author interviews, Manila, January 2008.

³⁸ Otherwise known as effects-based operations, this approach to COIN has been used extensively in protracted areas of insurgent conflict, including Iraq and Afghanistan. The basic aim is to reduce the rebels’ willingness (as opposed to simply their ability) to fight by undermining the psychological and moral basis of their conflict.

³⁹ Author interview, Cotabato City, January 2008.

as discussed in Chapter Nine), it will be several years before a concerted regime of coastal and maritime security is operational in the south.⁴⁰

Finally, the Philippine military continues to suffer from varying degrees of politicization and corruption—on both individual and institutional levels.⁴¹ This has hampered the army's ability to fully capitalize on organizational reform and definitively address the range of domestic terrorist threats presently confronting Manila. More seriously, it has encouraged adventurism on the part of junior officers and is often cited as one of the main factors contributing to the coups and mutinies that continue to beset the AFP with alarming regularity.⁴²

⁴⁰ Author interviews, Manila, January 2008.

⁴¹ There have been numerous cases involving senior members of the AFP taking bribes from companies with interests to protect or simply falsely declaring their assets and outside business holdings. In one notable incident in 2004, an army general was court-martialed for amassing in excess of US\$2 million in cash and real estate on a US\$600/month salary (see Bayron, 2004).

⁴² Author interviews, Manila, January 2008; see also Conde, 2005. Corruption has always been part of the AFP culture and was, in fact, institutionalized during the Marcos era. When the former dictator was removed from power, members of the armed forces became politicized themselves, appropriating the role of watchdogs if they thought that the government was not functioning adequately. Numerous analysts have blamed the failure of the civilian administration in the Philippines on this messianic mindset in the military.

Counterterrorism and National Security in Indonesia

Historical and Political Context

Historically, all matters pertaining to Indonesian internal security fell within the domain of the military—the Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia (ABRI). Formed out of militias that had played a central role in the country’s war for independence from the Dutch (1945–1948) and situated at the core of Soeharto’s “new order” power structure, ABRI incorporated all four armed services and the police.¹ By including the latter, the assumption was that there was no clear distinction between external and internal security and that law enforcement was best effected through the national military infrastructure (Anwar, 2001, p. 16).

ABRI’s dominance in the politics and society of Indonesia was enshrined in the notion of *dwifungsi* (dual function), which was institutionalized by Soeharto as a central pillar of his military-backed dictatorship.² The doctrine required the army to act as the primary agent for safeguarding the “unity, security, and stability of the state”—through both its defense operations and active participation in civilian political life³—and was formalized in ABRI’s territorial command structure, which spanned the archipelago. Through this arrangement, each of the

¹ For a history of ABRI, see Lowry, 1996.

² For a comprehensive analysis of the history and mechanics of *dwifungsi*, see Crouch, 2007.

³ The “Unity of the Republic of Indonesia” is one of the five principles of Indonesia’s state ideology, known as *Pancasila*.

military's 12 *komando daerah militer* (military command areas) performed a social development and security role by undertaking domestic surveillance and intelligence⁴ and maintaining close liaison with local officials mandated with implementing central government policies (Kingsbury, 2003, p. 79). Units of soldiers were thus placed at every level of society, paralleling each tier of the political administration, while both serving and retired military officers were appointed to senior positions in the national and provincial bureaucracies.⁵

Charged with maintaining the domestic stability and integrity of Indonesia, ABRI was accorded sweeping powers by Soeharto and specially tasked with countering three main threats,⁶ all of which were deemed to represent a direct challenge to the state ideology of *Pancasila*:⁷ separatism in East Timor, Aceh, and Papua, which was seen as a challenge to the unity of the state; religious extremism, which was seen as a threat to the form of the republic (secularism);⁸ and liberal-

⁴ ABRI maintained exclusive control over the country's intelligence services (civilian and noncivilian) to monitor and control the internal affairs of political parties, labor movements, student bodies, and other social organizations (see Sirozi, 2005, and Sebastian, 2006, pp. 80–110).

⁵ Officers were also appointed to the Regional Representative Council, along with provincial governors, heads of districts, and mayors. In addition, 20 percent of seats in the Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat (People's Representative Council) and the Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat (People's Consultative Assembly) were allocated to ABRI, though many more were appointed and came to dominate the latter.

⁶ Much of this mandate was instituted through ABRI's principal intelligence and covert operations arm, Komando Operasi Pemulihan Keamanan dan Ketertiban (Kopkamtib, the Operational Command to Restore Security and Order), which was originally established in 1966 in response to an attempted communist coup. Kopkamtib was superseded by Badan Koordinasi Stabilitas Nasional (Bakorstanas, the National Stability Coordination Agency) in 1988, which was invested with even wider discretionary powers to detain and interrogate those identified as a threat to national security (see Kingsbury, 2003, pp. 129–133).

⁷ Pancasila embodies five main principles for defining the identity of the postcolonial Indonesian state. Enunciated in the preamble to the country's 1945 constitution, these are a belief in one supreme God, humanitarianism, nationalism (expressed in the unity of the republic), consultative democracy, and social justice (see Frederick and Worden, 1993).

⁸ Following an attempted communist coup, ideological extremism was also embraced as a specific national security concern. In 1966, ABRI's Kopkamtib carried out a systematic and highly brutal purge of known or suspected communists (and their sympathizers)

ism, which was seen as a threat both to *dwifungsi* and to the military's dominance of business life.⁹

Largely due to mounting public pressure in response to the intrusiveness and lack of accountability of the security forces, in addition to calls for a clearer distinction between the army, government, and police, incremental moves were made to modify the ABRI organizational structure beginning in the late 1980s. This process, which rapidly gathered pace following the onset of the Asian financial crisis, culminated in October 1998 when the military announced it was instituting a so-called *paradigma baru* (literally, new paradigm): a doctrinal shift predicated on the twin principles of civilian power-sharing and noninterference in political affairs. Otherwise known as *reformasi*, the unprecedented reorientation led to the formal dismantling of ABRI and its replacement with two separate and functionally distinct bodies: TNI, responsible for external defense, and POLRI, responsible for internal security (ICG, 2004d, p. 2).

Reformasi has gone a long way toward extricating the military from national politics, marginalizing its law enforcement role and undermining many of the institutional privileges it has historically enjoyed.¹⁰ That said, the institutional separation of POLRI from the TNI, particularly in terms of terrorism and CT, is far from complete, much less consolidated. While the respective roles of the army and police have been specified as defense and security,¹¹ these tasks have never

during which an estimated 50,000 Indonesians were massacred (see Kingsbury, 2003, pp. 129–133).

⁹ Political liberalism was viewed as a threat to *dwifungsi* in the sense of pressuring for the separation of civil and military powers and agitating for ABRI's increased transparency to account for past human rights abuses. Economic liberalism was viewed as a challenge to the extensive array of business interests that the army developed under Soeharto (many with the president's family)—ranging from large corporations at the national level to small-scale enterprises in the outer provinces—the bulk of which were secured through explicit anti-competitive practices (Akkoyunlu, 2007, p. 47).

¹⁰ It should be noted that, because the military's territorial command structure remains in place, officers and troops continue to have at least some ability to tap into economic resources at the grassroots level as well as influence local politics (Mietzner, 2006, pp. viii, 62–63).

¹¹ These respective roles are enshrined in Decree VI/2000.

been defined, which has inevitably led to confusion over jurisdictional mandates. Further complicating matters, although POLRI is formally charged with primary responsibility for responding to terrorist incidents and establishing associated command-and-control arrangements, Decree VII/2000 designates the TNI as the lead agency for protecting “all Indonesians from threats and disturbances to the country”; Law 3/2002 charges the army with responsibility for ensuring “the safety of the whole nation from any threat”; and Law 34/2004 mandates the military to undertake *operasi militer selain perang* (military operations other than war), specifically as they relate to armed separatist movements, terrorism, piracy, and illegal migration. These inconsistencies in the direction of and responsibility for CT have yet to be resolved and continue to act as a catalyst for conflict and confusion between the police and military today (ICG, 2004d, pp. 5, 10; Sebastian, 2006, p. 391).

Resources Allocated to the National Security Mission

Following the 9/11 attacks and the discovery of the so-called “Singapore Plot” in December 2001,¹² the Indonesian government came under sustained regional and international pressure to act against alleged Islamist extremists living, hiding, or based in the country. However, Jakarta largely ignored these overtures, not only denying that the republic had a domestic terrorist problem, but also obliquely suggesting that the post-2001 U.S.-led GWOT amounted to little more than an unjustified assault against the entire Islamic world.

¹² The Singapore Plot was an al-Qaeda-instigated and -financed plan that was to have been carried out in conjunction with JI and was to have involved coordinated bombings of U.S. warships docked at the Changi Naval Base, the defense ministry, a shuttle bus serving the Sembawang Wharves and Yishun, the U.S. and Israeli embassies, the British and Australian high commissions, and commercial plazas hosting Western companies and business interests. The plot first came to light following the seizure of a videotape and notes from an al-Qaeda leader’s house in Afghanistan detailing reconnaissance of potential targets in Singapore (see Chalk, 2005, p. 28; Gunaratna, 2002; “Singapore Terror Group Had Plan to Bomb US Warships,” 2002; and “A Tale with Many Beginnings,” 2002).

It was only after the Bali bombings of October 2002 that the central administration began to appreciate the radical religious threat in its midst and moved to allocate dedicated resources to the contemporary CT mission. Legally, two antiterrorism regulations were immediately issued, which were subsequently promulgated into Laws 15/2003 and 16/2003 five months later. The first empowered the police to detain terrorism suspects for up to six months before indictment and gave prosecutors and judges the authority to block bank accounts belonging to individuals or organizations believed to be funding militant activities; the scope of this legislation was further expanded following the JW Marriott bombing in 2003 (Sebastian, 2006, p. 13). The second dealt specifically with the Bali attacks and was used, somewhat controversially, to retroactively prosecute those implicated in the atrocity.¹³ In addition to these legislative initiatives, the attorney general's department established the Terrorism and Transnational Crime Task Force (TTCTF) in 2006. Supported by U.S. Department of State (DoS) funding, the agency is primarily designed to help Indonesia cope with the number of terrorism-related trials that have arisen in the post-2002 period. The body consists of a cadre of specially trained prosecutors who have expertise in the legal dimensions of terrorism and who are empowered to oversee the execution of court cases involving militant offenses on a nationwide basis (DoS, 2007b).

Substantial efforts were also made to improve and expand law enforcement CT capacity. Prior to 2002, POLRI's CT resources and expertise were mainly housed in Gegana Regiment II of the Brigade Mobil (BRIMOB, Jakarta's main paramilitary force),¹⁴ which con-

¹³ Author interviews, Jakarta, January 2008. Retrospective enactment in criminal law runs counter to the general principle of *nullem crimen sine lege, nulla poena sine lege* (no crime without a law, no punishment without a law) that is recognized in all of the world's major legal systems and explicitly enunciated in Article 11(2) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations General Assembly, 1948). This concept requires that an individual knows before he or she commits an act whether it is a criminal offense of the sort that will result in punishment.

¹⁴ BRIMOB was established in 1946 to succeed the police special forces of the Dutch and Japanese periods. A dedicated CT unit, Gegana, was created within the force in 1976 and was renamed Gegana Regiment II in 1996. BRIMOB has been implicated in serious human rights abuses committed against separatist forces and other self-defined enemies of

sisted of four detachments: A, responsible for intelligence; B, responsible for bomb disposal; C, responsible for take-down operations; and D, responsible for training. Immediately following the 2002 Bali attacks, an ad hoc national bomb task force—Tim Bomb—was formed to assist in the investigation of the attacks. Many of the key JI arrests that occurred in 2002 and 2003 were credited to this team, which has since evolved into an adept police explosives intelligence wing (Conboy, 2008, p. 141).

A more significant boost to POLRI's CT capacities came in June 2003 when a dedicated national CT force, Detachment 88, was raised. The unit, which was set up through the DoS Antiterrorism Assistance (ATA) program (see Chapter Nine), consists of four divisions that respectively focus on investigations, intelligence, logistical support, and hostage rescue and raids (through a crisis response team). In 2004, provincial-level teams were established and have since spearheaded the bulk of CT operations carried out across the country. Detachment 88 members are seconded from POLRI and trained at the Megamendung Detective and Criminal Training Center south of Jakarta (Conboy, 2008, p. 141; Haseman, 2004, p. 48).¹⁵ The unit has enjoyed considerable success in breaking and disrupting jihadist cells in Indonesia and is now generally considered a highly proficient and capable elite law enforcement entity.

On a wider level, moves have also been made to facilitate coordination and collaboration between POLRI and other police forces in Southeast Asia. Of particular note is the Jakarta Centre for Law Enforcement Cooperation (JCLEC), which is located at the Indonesian National Police Academy in Semarang, Central Java. Created in 2004 with Australian government seed money (A\$36.8 million over

the state and continues to be barred from all U.S. security assistance (author interviews, Washington, D.C., December 2007; Conboy, 2008, pp. 135–139).

¹⁵ Detachment 88 members are equipped with a broad array of weaponry, including Colt M4 assault rifles, Armalite AR-10 sniper rifles, Remington 870 shotguns, Koch submachine guns, and Glock 9-mm pistols. One U.S. police official associated with the detachment's training gauged the unit's current effectiveness to be as high as 70 percent when compared to that of a typical U.S. SWAT team.

five years),¹⁶ the center provides a comprehensive curriculum of instruction in investigations, information analysis, and specific litigation areas, such as international criminal law (JCLEC, 2005; Vincent, 2005).¹⁷

As noted, although primary responsibility for CT rests with POLRI, the military continues to retain a mandated national CT role. The main branch charged with responsibility in this area is the Komando Pasukan Khusus (Kopassus, the special forces command), the best-trained and -resourced unit within the TNI.¹⁸ The bulk of its CT activity is directed either at deep-cover infiltration of organizations considered to represent a threat to national security (the responsibility of Group IV) or at antihijacking and special recovery missions (the responsibility of Group V, also referred to as Satuan Gulangan 81, which works closely with Detachment 88's crisis response team) (Kingsbury, 2003, p. 101). Indonesia has sought to consolidate and expand the command's role in internal security post-2002, requesting foreign assistance to help enhance its overall level of expertise in CT. Due to ongoing concerns relating to human rights abuses, Kopassus currently receives no support from the United States.¹⁹ However, it is benefiting from Australian training, particularly in the areas

¹⁶ It should be noted that the Netherlands also contributed a significant amount of money—10 million euros—to help set up JCLEC.

¹⁷ Seasoned professionals from outside Southeast Asia are responsible for much of the training that takes place at JCLEC. Since its creation, instructors from Australia, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Italy, Spain, Sweden, and the Russian Federation have all participated in programs taught at the facility.

¹⁸ Besides Kopassus, small specialist CT units exist in both the navy and air force: the Kesatuan Gurita, an elite marine team responsible for safeguarding naval installations and strategic offshore platforms, such as oil rigs, and the Satgas Atbara, a wing of the Paskuan Pemukul Reaksi Cepat (Rapid-Reaction Strike Force) responsible for any terrorism-related incident at an Indonesian air force base).

¹⁹ Kopassus has been implicated in serious human rights abuses committed in Aceh, East Timor, and Papua, and its so-called “black ninjas” have been accused of terrorizing rural communities across Indonesia for political and pecuniary reasons (author interviews, Washington, D.C., December 2007; Dupont, 2003, p. 19).

of close-quarter combat, hostage rescue, and development of effective intelligence processes.²⁰

Besides the police and military, a number of changes and modifications were made to domestic intelligence. In 2001, President Wahid replaced the military-dominated Baden Koordinasi Intelijen Negara (BAKIN, the State Intelligence Coordinating Body)²¹ with a civilian agency named the Baden Intelijen Nasional (BIN, the National Intelligence Agency), substantially boosting its budget and enhancing its ability to oversee the operation of national covert surveillance and monitoring activities. After the 2002 Bali bombings, Megawati Sukarnoputri issued Law 5/2002, which further strengthened BIN's coordinating role by giving the agency's chief statutory authority to manage all information gathering and sharing across the country—including that taking place in Baden Intelijen Strategies, a military agency with some limited foreign liaison functions and responsibilities that was created as an all-military intelligence agency in 1983. In addition, two intelligence schools were established (one undergraduate, one postgraduate) to enhance the analytical skills of serving officers, particularly in the areas of critical thinking and long-range strategic forecasting (Kingsbury, 2003, pp. 132–133; Conboy, 2004, pp. 246–247).

In an attempt to better integrate and streamline CT cooperation among the police, military, and intelligence communities, Megawati wrote Presidential Instruction No. 4 on October 22, 2002. This executive order sanctioned the creation of the Terrorism Eradication Coordinating Desk (TECD) within the Office of the Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal and Security Affairs (led, at the time, by current President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono). The TECD formally commenced operations in December of that year under the authority of the inspector general, Ansy'aad Mboi, now retired. The “Desk” has 58 members—15 permanent and 43 ad hoc—whose duty is to

²⁰ Author interviews, Adelaide, April 2008; Nelson, 2006. Australia has openly engaged Kopassus on the grounds that this is necessary to reinstitute military-military contacts between the TNI and its own defense forces, which were basically severed as a result of Canberra's role in leading the East Timor Intervention Force in 1999.

²¹ BAKIN was established in 1967 to monitor the wider population and preempt the activities of those it deemed to represent a threat to the ruling regime.

ensure closer coordination across all government agencies involved in the national CT campaign (Sebastian, 2003, p. 381, fn. 28; "Indonesia to Hold Counter-Terrorism Conference," 2007).

Key Counterterrorism Programs and Measures

While institutional responsibility for CT lies with both the police and military, in practical terms, this aspect of state security has been viewed primarily as a function of law and order, which has necessarily placed POLRI at the center of its implementation.²² In exercising this mandate, the agency uses persuasion and, when necessary, force. Considerable emphasis has been given to developing effective unconventional interrogation techniques based on patron-client relationships that are defined in terms of mutual trust rather than authority. POLRI refers to this approach as *deradicalization*, the heart of which is predicated on the principle of "using a thief to catch a thief." Involving senior police officers eating meals with detainees, taking them out for limited excursions, and allowing reunions with their families, the concept has a threefold aim: first, to persuade imprisoned militants to abandon violence; second, to encourage these individuals to provide actionable intelligence on terrorists still at large; and third, to use converts as agents of positive influence vis-à-vis other inmates, militants they have trained or interacted with in the past and (upon release from prison), relatives, and friends. Ultimately, deradicalization seeks to both "reconvert" hardened terrorists and neutralize the jihadist ideology upon which they depend and thrive.²³

A critical adjunct to the deradicalization program is the regulation of monetary flows from outside. Because "liquid" cash is so important in a prison context—buying influence, protection, and favors from

²² TNI operations have been directed primarily toward eradicating threats from separatists and other groups that are deemed to represent a threat to regime stability. It was not until after the 2002 Bali bombings that it devoted significant resources to CT.

²³ Author interviews, Jakarta, November 2007; see also ICG, 2007d; Moore, 2004; and Mydans, 2008a.

other convicts as well as guards and wardens susceptible to bribes—it frequently means the difference between a bearable and unbearable term in confinement. Providing financial assistance to a detainee's family, such as covering school fees, housing costs, and medical bills, can thus act as a powerful lever of control and persuasion—not least because it frees up assets that immediate kin and relatives can then send to help make life in jail tolerable. According to the ICG, this socioeconomic approach to deradicalization has been highly effective in encouraging militants to turn away from terrorism and work with the authorities (ICG, 2007d, pp. 3–5).

Another principal pillar of POLRI's soft CT approach is its community policing program. Based on Japanese and British models and reflecting best practices as recommended by the International Organization for Migration, the program aims to familiarize mid-ranking officers with the principles of human rights, public outreach, and grassroots confidence-building measures.²⁴ In Bali, the program has also entailed a provision for local *pecalang* (traditional guardsmen) to work with the police on village security (Tumanggor, 2007, p. 98).

Spearheading POLRI's more hard-line CT approach has been Detachment 88, which has played a significant role in disrupting active jihadist cells by apprehending or otherwise eliminating their constituent members. This has been especially apparent with JI, which has witnessed at least four of its leading members killed or detained in Indonesia over the past three years: Azari Hussein (fatally shot in 2005); Zarkasih (arrested in 2007); Abu Dujana (apprehended in 2007); and Faiz Fauzan (apprehended in 2008). Detachment 88 has also been highly active in denting JI's "ground troops"—as well as those of other indigenous jihadist entities—with some 450 militants captured since 2005, around a quarter of whom have been convicted and jailed (see, e.g., Ng, 2008; Fealy, 2008, p. 391; Schmitt, 2008; DoS, 2008d; and Patung, 2006a). Besides disrupting JI terrorist activity,

²⁴ Between November 2003 and November 2006, the International Organization for Migration trained 8,280 POLRI members: 3,545 on the principles of community policing and 4,735 on human rights awareness. An additional 2,555 officers participated in the organization's Police and Community Partnership Forum (IOM, undated).

Detachment 88's operations aim to curtail the JI's links with domestic Indonesian groups, such as Ring Banten, as well as ASG and renegade MILF elements in the southern Philippines, which, as previously noted, are now mostly confined to JI's pro-bombing faction.²⁵

Supporting POLRI's CT efforts are programs that have been developed by BIN, which now views CT as its primary mission. Much of the agency's immediate work in this area is undertaken through Directorate 43. Composed of a so-called "special penetration team" whose members are fluent in Arabic and learned in the Muslim faith, this unit is tasked with infiltrating jihadist organizations to counter militant messages from the inside out. BIN's broader objective is to integrate these efforts into a concerted program aimed at long-term counter-radicalization (as opposed to deradicalization). To this end, the agency has emphasized a matrix-based approach to monitoring Islamist groups and their social networks. The aim is to identify future terrorists and violent demagogues by analyzing the type of religious literature people are reading, writing, and propagating. By tracking previously unknown individuals and groups that have not yet appeared on the "militant radar screen" but may have been radicalized through one of the many JI or other extremist education outlets in Indonesia, BIN hopes to preempt those who are liable to grow impatient for "instant jihad."

Finally, although Indonesia has adopted a mainly national rather than multilateral approach to CT, the government has taken steps to strengthen collaboration with regional neighbors as part of its overall CT effort. Most notably, these have included joint operations, intelligence exchanges, and extradition agreements with Malaysia and Singapore to hunt down Islamists at large. (The 2008 arrest of Abdul Rohim noted in Chapter Five occurred with the explicit cooperation of Kuala Lumpur; see, e.g., Ng, 2008, and Collins, 2008) and safeguard the strategically important Malacca Straits.²⁶ Jakarta has also

²⁵ Author interviews, Jakarta, November 2007 and January 2008.

²⁶ Author interviews, Kuala Lumpur, September 2006. Given the volume of trade that passes through the Malacca Straits, including shipments of liquefied natural gas, and its key role in expediting maritime commerce between the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean,

signed various accords and protocols with regional states. The most important are an MoU on combating terrorism with Australia (signed February 7, 2002); a mutual legal assistance treaty with the Republic of Korea (signed March 30, 2002); and an agreement on information exchange and establishment of communication procedures with Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Cambodia (signed May 7, 2002).²⁷ In addition, Indonesia is party to the ASEAN Plan of Action to Combat Transnational Crimes (endorsed May 17, 2002), which is specifically designed to address terrorism, maritime piracy, and arms trafficking (see “Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism in Asia: The Philippine Perspective,” 2003, and United Nations Security Council, 2004).

Assessment

One of the most important achievements in Indonesia’s CT efforts since 2002 has been the successful transition of the police force from a dependent and junior arm of ABRI to an effective agency for internal security in its own right. In a relatively short period, POLRI has developed effective monitoring, investigation, and interdiction capabilities that are in accordance with the demands of the country’s nascent democratic political frameworks. As a result of offensive efforts instituted primarily through Detachment 88, Indonesia today is without doubt a far less terrorist-rich environment than it was just a few years ago. As noted, more than 450 militants have so far been arrested and there have been no major attacks since 2005. Reflecting this positive progress, DoS lifted its travel warning for the country in May 2008, with the U.S. Embassy in Jakarta affirming that the decision stemmed from the “objective improvements made by Indonesia in its current situation” (“US Lifts Travel Warning for Indonesia,” 2008).

this particular chokepoint is regarded as one of the most strategically important in the wider Asia-Pacific region.

²⁷ In addition, Indonesia signed bilateral extradition treaties with the Special Administrative Region of Hong Kong and Thailand in 2001; however, these agreements have yet to be ratified.

Just as significantly, POLRI has achieved a degree of success with its detainee deradicalization program, which has seen an estimated 30 leading militants—many with combat experience or training in Afghanistan—working to reconvert those they had formerly instructed. Arguably the two highest-profile individuals in this regard are Ali Imron, presently serving a life sentence for his role in the 2002 Bali bombings,²⁸ and Nasir Abas, a Malaysian national who helped establish the JI infrastructure in the southern Philippines. Imron is currently cooperating with the authorities to put out a message that violent jihad is wrong and, through taped monologues, has become a leading voice for tolerance and moderation at the Al-Islam religious school in Central Java. Abas, who is now free, travels around the country appearing at public forums as a “born-again antiterrorist evangelist,” encouraging debate and discussion on true and perverted interpretations of Islamic religious texts. He has also published a book, *Exposing Jemaah Islamiyah*, which vigorously denounces the “misguided ways” of the movement to which he used to belong (ICG, 2007d, pp. 12–13; see also Martin, 2007; O’Brien, 2007; and Mydans, 2008a). Besides converting “star” personalities, POLRI’s deradicalization program has been instrumental in persuading a growing number of mid- and lower-level functionaries to collaborate with the police and intelligence agencies and provide valuable raw intelligence on their former terrorist networks, colleagues, and operations.

At the public level, attitudes have also changed from skepticism concerning a homegrown terrorist problem to active support for the government’s CT efforts. To be sure, part of the reason for this shift has been POLRI’s ability to provide convincing evidence that Indonesian nationals were behind many of the most destructive bombings that occurred in the country between 2002 and 2005. However, it is also indicative of growing trust in the authorities at the grassroots level, with initiatives such as the community policing program going a long

²⁸ Also convicted with Imron were Imam Samudra, Mukhlis (aka Ali Ghulfron), and Amrozi bin Nurhasyim, all of whom were sentenced to death in 2003. After a series of failed appeals and legal challenges, the executions were eventually carried out on a prison island off Java on November 8, 2008 (see Gelling, 2008a, 2008b).

way to reversing police practices that were heavy-handed, militaristic, and largely unaccountable.²⁹

Despite these impressive achievements, numerous problems continue to beset Indonesian CT efforts. At a basic level, the country continues to provide a potentially attractive logistical and operational theater for terrorism due to its porous land and sea borders, endemic criminality, residual radical undertones and sentiments within certain quarters of the wider Muslim population, and the ready availability of weapons and bomb-making material. Exacerbating the situation is rampant corruption that extends to both the governing and security bureaucracies. Transparency International named the parliament and political parties among Indonesia's most corrupt institutions in 2005 and 2006³⁰ and ranked the country as a whole 143rd out of 180 on its Corruption Perception Index in 2008 (Transparency International, 2008, pp. 191–194; see also Montlake, 2008, and Fealy, 2008, pp. 390–391).³¹ Problems are not confined to the governing bureaucracy; they also extend to the security community, which has had direct ramifications for CT. A case in point concerns Rohim, who was arrested in Malaysia in 2008 (see Table 5.1 in Chapter Five). Following his capture, the JI operative testified that he had been able to leave Indonesia on false passports simply by bribing immigration officials at Jakarta's international airport (see Brummitt, 2008, and Sebastian, 2003, p. 381, fn. 28).

²⁹ Author interviews, Jakarta, November 2007 and January 2008.

³⁰ As Greg Fealy (2008, p. 391) comments,

[C]orruption and inefficiency have become bywords for parliament. Many lawmakers demand payment from government departments and interested parties to deliberate on and pass bills. The enactment of bills is very slow, and much of the legislation that does become law is poorly drafted and frequently contradicts or overlaps with existing laws. A string of sex and graft scandals in the parliament has further dented its reputation.

³¹ In 2007, Transparency International gave Indonesia a Corruption Perception Index score of only 2.3 out of a possible 10. Although Indonesia has moved to tackle the issue of corruption, establishing an elite corruption eradication commission with U.S. support in 2002 (which, along with special ad hoc courts, has been credited with the successful prosecution of dozens of former and serving bureaucrats, including five ex-cabinet ministers), it has a small staff (600 employees) and operates on an annual budget of only US\$18 million (compared to the US\$235 million allocated for the police).

Organizational problems also loom large. Interagency cooperation is suboptimal, particularly between POLRI and TNI, due to conflicting spheres of jurisdiction and functional confusion arising out of laws that continue to mandate an internal security role for the military. Compounding matters is the absence of a truly effective mechanism to coordinate and streamline policy. Although the TECD is meant to provide such a functional forum, it is devoid of executive power, with most of its deliberations (and recommendations) defaulting to the lowest common denominator among its 58 members.

Within the institutional CT framework, weaknesses are evident in the legal sphere. One critical shortcoming is the failure, thus far, to enact a consistent means of designating terrorist groups. Senior Indonesian officials, including Inspector General Mbai, who heads the TECD, have been advocating reform to deal with this shortcoming for some time, largely to no avail. It is noteworthy that, despite a statement by the judge ruling on the 15-year sentencing of Abu Dujana and Zarkasih in 2008 that JI was a “forbidden organization,” the central government has still to formally ban the movement under Indonesian law.³²

Prisons also represent a major problem. Corruption, overcrowding, organized violence, protection rackets, the limited nature of available intelligence on detainees, and poorly managed, trained, and paid staff are all evident, and each, in its own way and in combination, contributes to the appeal and sense of jihadist solidarity in jails. Not only has this effectively transformed the penal system into a principal hub of terrorist recruitment and indoctrination, it has also prevented deradicalization programs from taking full effect and achieving the type of results that might otherwise have been forthcoming (ICG, 2007d, pp. 2–6).

Besides prisons, there are two other inputs that continue to feed the incremental radicalization of Indonesian society that have yet to be comprehensively addressed in CT drives. First are Islamist publications, which, as observed in Chapter Four, are both freely available and highly accessible across the country. Much of this literature

³² Author interviews, Adelaide, April 2008; see also Fitzpatrick, 2008.

is translated from Arabic and sold in nonconventional markets (such as mosque book stores), often for as little as US\$1.³³ There is little doubt of the proselytist potential stemming from the unchecked dissemination of this extremist literature, with numerous commentators highlighting the material as integral to the more hard-line Islamist sentiments and attitudes that continue to be evident in parts of Indonesian society.³⁴ That said, there should be no move to impose a blanket ban on these works (even assuming that this could be achieved). As noted, BIN relies on printed material to effect its broader counter-radicalization strategy and to gain insight into ideological developments taking place in the militant Muslim world. Moreover, as the ICG points out, it is infinitely more preferable to have Islamists wage their jihad via the written word than through the perpetration of actual physical violence (ICG, 2008a, p. 15).

Second is the complex of radical religious schools that have expanded throughout Indonesia. Not only are outwardly Islamist groupings developing educational networks that focus on ideological indoctrination and “practical” instruction in aspects of bomb making and weapon handling, a growing number of after-hours study groups are now also embracing curricula that include explicit or at least tacit militaristic-oriented jihadist undertones. Moreover, it is clear that JI is actively seeking to expand the number of religious schools under its control as part of its overall effort to promote the movement’s theological legitimacy, identity, and consciousness. Further compounding the situation is the Internet, which is emerging as an increasingly important vehicle for “self-radicalization”—not least by opening a virtual conduit to Islamist propaganda and influence.³⁵

In sum, while Indonesia has done much to retard the immediate terrorist threat in its midst, much still needs to be done to comprehensively mitigate the radicalism that drives jihadist recruitment and violence. One of the biggest challenges will be complacency stemming from the country’s short-term successes against JI and other indige-

³³ Author interview, Adelaide, April 2008; ICG, 2008a, p. 12.

³⁴ Author interview, Adelaide, April 2008.

³⁵ Author interviews, Jakarta, November 2007 and January 2008.

nous groups.³⁶ A return to the inaction and lax attitude that characterized the pre-2002 period not only will undo the progress that has been made to date, it will also serve to dangerously expand the latitude available to both existing and newly developing Islamist cells and support networks.

³⁶ There are signs that this may already be occurring. According to one analyst closely apprised of the Indonesian landscape, there is a growing sense in the political leadership that the terrorist problem has diminished and that further CT drives are therefore unwarranted or, at least, unnecessary (author interview, Adelaide, April 2008).

National Security in Southeast Asia: The U.S. Dimension

Most U.S. CT assistance in Southeast Asia is directed toward building and sustaining national capacity. All three focus countries discussed in this monograph receive varying levels of assistance, with the lion's share going to Indonesia and the Philippines. This chapter provides an overview of the main components of U.S. CT support and considers some of the principal challenges associated with ensuring its effective implementation in receiving host nations.

Main Components of U.S. Security and Counterterrorism Assistance

U.S. security and civilian CT assistance is primarily channeled through the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD), DoS, and the U.S. Department of Justice (DoJ), with USAID playing a somewhat more limited (but still meaningful) role in the areas of development and governance. DoD administers two relevant political-military programs: the International Military Education and Training (IMET) and the Foreign Military Financing (FMF) programs; DoS runs both the dedicated ATA and a broader suite of initiatives instituted through the International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement program (INCLE); DoJ is responsible for overseeing the International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program (ICITAP); and USAID (with policy guidance from DoS) manages the Economic Support Fund (ESF). Each of these is briefly summarized next.

International Military Education and Training Program

According to former Secretary of State Colin Powell, dollar for dollar, IMET is one of the best security assistance programs run by the United States. IMET's main purpose is to sponsor serving officers in allied armed forces undertaking professional military education in the United States. The hope is that by attending these courses, participants will not only gain a thorough understanding in macro areas such as rules of engagement, human rights awareness, and international military law that will then be imparted to their home units and institutions, they will also build solid cooperative relationships with their U.S. counterparts. Worldwide, roughly 125 countries receive IMET funding; in Southeast Asia, there are established programs with Indonesia, the Philippines, Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, and Thailand.¹

Foreign Military Financing Program

FMF essentially consists of a trust account that is set up in a recipient country and administered by the Defense Security Cooperation Agency in the Office of the Secretary of Defense. Money is deposited into the trust and then used to purchase U.S. defense articles and services as provided through the U.S. Foreign Military Sales system. Funds mostly pay for hardware and technical training, though a certain amount is also earmarked for promoting defense reform and transformation.²

Antiterrorism Assistance Program

Congress authorized the ATA program in 1983 through the Foreign Assistance Act. According to this legislation, the purpose of ATA is to

- (1) enhance the antiterrorism skills of friendly countries by providing training and equipment to deter and counter terrorism;
- (2) strengthen the bilateral ties of the United States with friendly governments by offering concrete assistance in . . . area[s] of . . . mutual concern; and
- (3) increase respect for human rights by sharing with foreign civil authorities modern, humane, and effec-

¹ Author interviews, Washington, D.C., December 2007.

² Author interviews, Washington, D.C., December 2007.

tive antiterrorism techniques.” (Pub. L. 87-195, Pt. II, para. 5, as amended by Pub. L. 98-151, para. 101[b][2], 97 Stat. 972, 1983)

The DoS Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism (S/CT) provides policy, guidance, and funding for ATA programs, which are then implemented by the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, Office of Anti-terrorism Assistance. Support consists mostly of underwriting training courses on tactical and strategic CT issues and furnishing grants for relevant hardware, such as small arms, bomb detection equipment, vehicles, and computers. It also provides specialized consultations to partner nations on an as-needed basis (GAO, 2008, pp. 5–6).

International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement Program

DoS INCLE component programs are designed to bolster the police and judicial capacities of partner governments and generally promote their ability to successfully meet the criminal and related terrorist demands of the 21st century. Initiatives are undertaken with law enforcement, judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys, border security officials, financial intelligence units, anticorruption bureaus, narcotics control agencies, socioeconomic groups, NGOs, and other counterparts and cover the full spectrum of training, technical assistance, interagency cooperation, and sector institutional development (DoS, undated).

International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program

DoJ initiated ICITAP in 1986 in response to a request from DoS for assistance in training police forces in Latin America. Since then, the program has expanded to a global level with the basic aim of developing professional civilian-based law enforcement institutions. ICITAP is closely coordinated with INCLE³ and directed toward (1) enhancing basic and advanced investigative and forensic functions; (2) assisting with the development of academic instruction and curricula for police officials; (3) improving the administrative and management capa-

³ In fact, ICITAP acts as an effective “subcontractor” for the bureau that oversees INCLE. According to one DoJ official, each year, ICITAP submits a budget to DoS. Should the bureau approve the proposed costing schedule, an interagency agreement is made and funds are transferred (see Fair and Chalk, 2006, p. 109, fn. 26).

bilities of law enforcement agencies, especially in relation to career advancement, personnel evaluation, and internal discipline procedures; (4) improving the relationship between state agents of law and order and the communities they serve; and (5) creating or strengthening the capacity of partner nations to effectively respond to new or emergent criminal justice issues (DoJ, undated).

Economic Support Fund

The ESF is primarily aimed at supporting U.S. foreign policy interests by providing assistance to key U.S. allies and countries in democratic transition. The funds are used mostly to finance economic stabilization and job-creation programs, assist with the development of transparent systems necessary for sustainable democracy and the rule of law, and strengthen efforts of local NGOs to offer critical services (such as education) in target communities. The ESF is managed by USAID with policy guidance from DoS (Citizens for Global Solutions, undated).

U.S. Security Assistance to Primary Partner Nations in Southeast Asia

Thailand

All U.S. security assistance to Thailand was curtailed in 2006 as a result of the military-led coup that toppled the Thaksin administration. Although aid has now been restored, thanks to the 2008 reconstitution of a civilian-led government, overall levels remain small (as they have in the past), reflecting the country's relative wealth and ability to sustain a defense budget of roughly \$12 billion a year. Moreover, because Thailand insists that Malay Muslim militancy is a purely domestic issue that should not involve outside input, all U.S. support is necessarily couched in terms of promoting national security writ large rather than being applied toward more narrowly defined antimilitant sweeps in the deep south.⁴

⁴ Author interviews, Bangkok, September 2007, and Washington, D.C., December 2007.

Thailand typically receives between \$1 million and \$2 million a year in FMF and IMET funds (requested allocations for FY 2007 were \$1.3 million and \$2.3 million, respectively). Most of this money has been slated for boosting the CT capabilities of the country's elite special forces and their ability to meaningfully participate in coalition operations.⁵ Professional military education is additionally emphasized to expose senior RTA officers to U.S. military doctrine and practices as part of an overall effort to shape the modern Thai army in an era of restructuring and downsizing.⁶

A modest INCLE program is also in place in Thailand, which, like political-military assistance, usually amounts to around \$1 million in any given year (the request for FY 2007 was \$900,000). Currently, the bulk of this money is being used to augment police skills in crime investigation and forensics, which, as noted in Chapter Six, remain poor.⁷ A further \$800,000 is being provided to upgrade the TNP's aging computer system and install modern, high-output laser printers.⁸

Supplementing INCLE, roughly \$1.7 million in ATA assistance has been earmarked to help familiarize senior police officials with modern technologies aimed at disrupting terrorist financing and organizational structures, as well as expanding a computerized Terrorism Interdiction Program (TIP) watchlist to cover all ports of entry. In FY 2008, S/CT intends to make monies available to provide the TNP with explosives incident countermeasure training (aimed at rendering safe both vehicle and package IEDs) that will involve follow-on training for responding to chemical, biological, and radiological weapons in addition to expanding a nascent canine bomb-detection unit that was first established in 2007.⁹

⁵ Relevant units include the RTA's Task Force 90 and the Thai navy's SEAL detachment.

⁶ Author interviews, Washington, D.C., December 2007; DoS, 2006, pp. 374–375.

⁷ In addition, there are plans to assign a senior law enforcement advisor to Thailand to help promote and orchestrate organizational reform in the TNP.

⁸ Author interviews, Washington D.C., December 2007, and Bangkok, April 2008.

⁹ Author interview, Western official, Bangkok, April 2008; DoS, 2006, pp. 374–375.

Indonesia

While political-military assistance to Indonesia remains relatively small, the country represents one of the United States' largest recipients of INCLE, ATA, and ESF funding, which is generally recognized as having paid considerable dividends. In the words of one DoS official, "For the amount of money invested in Indonesia, Washington is getting a very good return."¹⁰

After a hiatus of more than a decade caused by human rights abuses and the army's complicity in sponsoring militia violence during East Timor's transition to independence, Indonesia became eligible for the full range of IMET courses in February 2005.¹¹ In FY 2007, \$1.24 million was allocated to the country, the bulk of which will be used to build on and expand reform and professionalism within the TNI—with regard to human rights awareness and the strengthening of civilian defense institutions. A request of \$974,000 to further augment these efforts was made for FY 2008.¹²

The United States has only recently commenced an FMF arrangement with Jakarta, allocating \$1 million in FY 2006. Levels were increased to \$6 million in 2007, with a request for \$15.7 million in FY 2008.¹³ Together with \$10 million in 1207 funds,¹⁴ most of these monies are being used to augment the Indonesian navy's ability to monitor its waterways, especially in the strategically important Malacca Straits and the tri-border terrorist transit region that encompasses the Sulu and Sulawesi Seas. The aim is to encourage national domain awareness and improve subregional coordination and information shar-

¹⁰ Author interviews, Washington, D.C., December 2007.

¹¹ As noted in Chapter Eight, Kopassus and BRIMOB are still barred from all U.S. security assistance on account of ongoing concerns that they continue to be complicit in serious human rights abuses.

¹² Author interviews, Washington, D.C., December 2007; DoS, 2006, pp. 357, 359.

¹³ Author interviews, Washington, D.C., December 2007.

¹⁴ FMF and 1207 funds are basically equivalent. The 1207 program is a DoD-authorized program that uses defense dollars to perform a DoS function, with DoS (in consultation with the Office of the Secretary of Defense) acting as the ultimate arbiter of how these monies are distributed and employed.

ing between the Indonesian navy and its counterparts in Malaysia and the Philippines.¹⁵

Over the past six years, Indonesia has requested and received significant ATA support, with total allocations between 2003 and 2007 amounting to \$40 million (see Table 9.1) (GAO, 2008, p. 30). Most of this aid has been used to establish the elite Detachment 88, which, as noted in Chapter Eight, has since developed into a highly capable law enforcement entity embracing the entire spectrum from intelligence collection and investigation to take-down operations. In FY 2007, \$4.54 million was allocated to specific Detachment 88-related programs, the bulk of which was spent on completing the unit's main training facility in Megamendung.¹⁶ Besides supporting Detachment 88, ATA monies have been provided to underwrite broader training courses for POLRI, including modules on crime scene and post-blast investigations, intelligence collection, forensics, and protection of digital infrastructure (through cyberterrorist tracking) (DoS, 2006, p. 360). Limited funding (\$1.7 million in FY 2007) has also been earmarked to underwrite a law enforcement restructuring, reform, and operations program that is mainly aimed at promoting technical restructuring in POLRI.¹⁷

Table 9.1
ATA Allocations to Indonesia, FYs 2002–2007 (millions of dollars)

ATA Allocation Recipient	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	Total ATA Allocations	% Total ATA Allocations
Indonesia	0.98	9.1	8.5	5.4	8.5	7.6	40.1	7.4
All countries and regions							542.9	100.0

SOURCE: U.S. Government Accountability Office analysis of S/CT ATA budget data on allocations for training and training-related activities.

¹⁵ Author interviews, Washington, D.C., December 2007; DoS, 2006, p. 359; Schmitt, 2008.

¹⁶ Author interview, Washington, D.C., December 2007.

¹⁷ Author interview, Washington, D.C., December 2007.

Indonesia receives significant INCLE funds in addition to its ATA support. Typically amounting to between \$4 million and \$5 million per year (a request for \$5.4 million has been made for FY 2008), this assistance is aimed at developing POLRI and its marine component into modern and effective civilian forces that are fully respectful of the rule of law and human rights. Together with ICITAP, INCLE resources have also been used to root out corruption through the creation of a corruption eradication commission (Chapter Eight), to help support the development of special CT prosecutors in the TTCTF, and to sustain the full-time deployment of two senior police officers and one resident legal advisor from DoJ. These officials are currently playing a leading role in providing advice on model legal codes, criminal litigation and terrorist prosecution (especially as it relates to the TTCTF), and otherwise assisting with general matters pertaining to law enforcement and the overall judicial process.¹⁸

The most concerted form of security assistance provided to Jakarta, however, is ESF funds that are used to consolidate democracy, foster responsible and transparent governance, facilitate economic growth, and expand educational opportunities. Washington regards all these areas as critical in furthering Indonesia's transition from authoritarianism to democratic rule, entrenching the country's slow but steady macroeconomic recovery from the 1997–1998 Asian financial crisis, and enhancing the general quality of primary and secondary schooling to lay the foundation for a skilled and tolerant future workforce.¹⁹ In FY 2007, \$80 million was requested in ESF monies, which accounted for nearly half (44 percent) of all allocations earmarked for the year (\$178 million). A broadly similar percentage ratio is expected for FY 2008.²⁰

¹⁸ Author interviews, Washington, D.C., December 2007; DoS, 2006, pp. 359–360.

¹⁹ It should be noted that educational reform is also supported through a presidential education initiative. Implemented in FY 2004, this program is funded through multiple accounts and will provide \$150 million per year until its scheduled termination in FY 2009.

²⁰ Author interviews, Washington, D.C., December 2007; DoS, 2006, pp. 358–359; USAID, 2007.

The Philippines

The Philippines is the largest benefactor of FMF backing in East Asia, with overall allocations rising from \$29.7 million in FY 2006 to \$39.7 million in FY 2007. Most of this money is being used to promote comprehensive defense reform and transformation in the AFP.²¹ However, a significant proportion is also being channeled to facilitate the purchase of air, surface, and ground assets and relevant logistic components needed in the GWOT, such as helicopters, transport trucks, C-130 airlift support, night-vision goggles, field radio sets, and body armor.²²

Thus far, \$5 million in 1207 funds have complemented this investment and, as with Indonesia, are aimed at promoting maritime security and domain awareness in the tri-border region of the Sulu and Sulawesi Seas. A central component of this effort (undertaken in conjunction with Australia)²³ has involved setting up Coast Watch South, which is aimed at systematically augmenting Manila's ability to mitigate the occurrence of maritime threats—broadly defined—in zones around the country's so-called “southern backdoor.”²⁴ The broad objective is to establish a string of monitoring stations that have both surveillance and interdiction capabilities and to connect these platforms through a central command center (to be known as the Maritime Information and Coordination Center) managed by interagency personnel and

²¹ Washington has been engaged in the Philippine Defense Reform program since 2005 and is currently helping to underwrite 10 priority program areas to further this process: the Multi-Year Defense Planning System, intelligence, operations and training, logistics, professional development, professional management, the Capability Upgrade Program, budget and management, the Defense Acquisition System, strategic communication, and information management (author interviews, Manila, January 2008; DoS, 2008a).

²² Author interviews, Washington, D.C., December 2007; DoS, 2006, p. 370.

²³ Canberra (through the Australian Department of Transportation and Regional Services) is currently providing technical advice and assistance on the setting up of Coast Watch South, which is modeled after a similar system that has been up and running in Australia for several years. At the time of this writing, no financial support was being offered (author interview, Manila, January 2008).

²⁴ Three development phases are envisioned for Coast Watch South: (1) an initial implementation phase, lasting up to three years; (2) an integration phase, lasting two to six years; and (3) a fully mission-capable phase, lasting five to nine years.

headed by the AFP.²⁵ The long-term goal is to tie Coast Watch South in the Philippines with radar stations in Malaysia (located at Kota Kinabalu in Sabah) and Indonesia (located at Monadao in north Sulawesi) to form an integrated trilateral system for regional offshore security.²⁶

A growing emphasis has additionally been placed on leveraging FMF funds to help sustain key CT skills imparted by U.S. forces as part of JUSMAG-P. Principally aimed at special forces, Scout Ranger, and marine battalions, as well as several army reconnaissance companies, training has mainly focused on operations intelligence fusion; unit interoperability; logistics; aspects of engineering, equipment, and maintenance; and “soft/smart” hearts-and-minds initiatives. As noted in Chapter Three, although U.S. troops are barred from actually engaging in active hostile actions (such engagement is prohibited under the Philippine constitution), they do participate in annual exercises with the AFP to test and audit introduced tactics, techniques, and procedures.

In addition to FMF, Manila continues to be one of the principal recipients of U.S. IMET assistance. In 2007, \$2.75 million was allocated to the country in the form of these funds; the request for FY 2008 stood at \$1.55 million—a reduction that reflects budgetary cutbacks in the United States rather than the manner by which Manila expends these monies. Covering the professional military education costs of 146 students, it is one of the largest such programs run by the United States anywhere in the world.²⁷ The current AFP chief of staff, the three service chiefs, and the Philippine Marine Corps commandant are all IMET graduates, having passed courses run by the Army Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, the U.S. Marine Corps Command and Staff College at Quantico, and the Naval Staff College at Newport (DoS, 2006, p. 370).

²⁵ Coast Watch South will involve the following agencies and bureaus: Philippine Navy, National Anti-Terrorism Task Force, Border Crossing Station, National Intelligence Coordinating Agency, Maritime Industry Authority, Philippines Port Authority, Bureau of Customs and Health Services, Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, Bureau of Immigration, PNP, and Philippine Coast Guard.

²⁶ Author interviews, Manila, January 2008; see also Schmitt, 2008.

²⁷ Author interview, Washington, D.C., December 2007.

Manila receives only modest amounts of INCLE and ATA assistance compared to its military support, and certainly far less than that allocated to Indonesia.²⁸ This would seem to reflect a belief in Washington that Mindanao represents the key terrorist hub in the Philippines and that the AFP is the best-equipped entity for managing and mitigating threats emanating from this theater (see, e.g., Schmitt, 2008). An average of \$1 million to \$1.5 million in INCLE funds is given to the Philippines each year. Since 2005, these have been primarily devoted to helping the PNP develop a comprehensive strategy on leadership, investigatory competence (particularly in terms of post-blast forensics and general crime scene management),²⁹ organizational restructuring, and technical assistance as part of a wider effort to foster a more effective and transparent civilian-led police force and promote the rule of law. INCLE (and ICITAP) monies have also been used to sponsor a resident legal advisor to assist with streamlining the highly inefficient Philippine court process in order to secure more prosecutions of detained terrorist suspects (the overall rate of which remains extremely low).³⁰

In terms of ATA, a total of \$3.6 million was allocated to the Philippines in FY 2007, a slight drop from the FY 2006 figure of \$4 million (see Table 9.2). These monies have been earmarked for two principal purposes: first, improving the state's capacity to address the financial

²⁸ The bulk of Australian security assistance, by contrast, is directed toward the Philippine law enforcement community, a mission that lies second only to Indonesia. (Despite rumors to the contrary, the Australian military has only three uniformed personnel permanently stationed in the country.) Canberra has been running a capacity-building project since 2004, which has been aimed primarily at augmenting the PNP's forensic abilities and post-blast investigative techniques. To foster the latter objective, the Australian Federal Police have been instrumental in setting up a bomb data center in February 2005 with an initial funding allocation of A\$1 million. Australia continues to cover the overhead and running costs of the facility with the expectation that Manila will eventually take over responsibility for these expenses (author interviews, Manila, January 2008).

²⁹ The FBI is currently working with the PNP to develop a system of evidence exploitation centers for post-blast investigations. Washington will furnish the system with forensics equipment and materials, as well as provide instructors, training aids, and materials (see Philippine Information Agency, 2008).

³⁰ Author interviews, Washington, D.C., December 2007; DoS, 2006, p. 371.

Table 9.2
ATA Allocations to the Philippines, FYs 2002–2007 (millions of dollars)

ATA Allocation Recipient	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	Total ATA Allocations	% Total ATA Allocations
Philippines	2.4	1.9	3.6	2.0	4.0	3.7	17.6	3.3
All countries and regions							542.9	100.0

SOURCE: U.S. Government Accountability Office analysis of S/CT ATA budget data on allocations for training and training-related activities.

underpinnings of terrorism by building an effective legal framework for countering money laundering, and second, further developing Manila's TIP watchlist system through computer software upgrades and by expanding its operations to additional ports of entry across the country (DoS, 2006, p. 371).

Finally, the United States has backed Manila with a steady flow of ESF assistance to attack pervasive corruption, reduce anticompetitive investment barriers, expand educational opportunities, and, especially, tackle unemployment and poverty—both of which are regarded as powerful drivers (if not root causes) of militant extremism in the southern Philippines. The main thrust of these latter endeavors, which are instituted through USAID's Growth and Equity in Mindanao program and currently funded at a level of \$190 million over five years, has been to nurture small-scale community infrastructure projects that are likely to have an immediate impact on people's day-to-day lives, such as the construction of manual water pumps, sanitation systems, market access roads, and local fish farms.³¹ In 2006, JUSMAG-P started channelling these developments efforts through U.S. Special Forces detachments stationed in the south, which has ensured that Growth and Equity in Mindanao initiatives are now systematically coordinated with U.S. security troops and implemented in areas that can be quarantined from attack and sabotage by militant entities (Gloria, 2008, p. 38).

³¹ Author interviews, Washington, D.C., December 2007; see also Cook and Collier, 2006, p. 44, and ICG, 2008b, p. 25.

Challenges Associated with the Implementation of U.S. Security Assistance in Southeast Asia

The provision of security assistance to partner nations in Southeast Asia has had several tangible benefits. In Thailand, ATA assistance has furthered Bangkok's ability to monitor its borders through modern, computer-based surveillance and data-storing systems. In the Philippines, there is little doubt that the AFP has benefited from FMF funding and JUSMAG-P training. This is perhaps best reflected by the military's successes against the ASG in Mindanao. As noted in Chapter Three, the group is currently estimated to have no more than 100 hardcore fighters, most of whom are scattered in small pockets across Jolo island and in Sulu province. In Indonesia the main payoff has been in the general arena of law enforcement—especially the establishment of Detachment 88, which is regarded as one of the most capable civilian CT forces operating in Southeast Asia.³² On a subregional level, ESF monies have been instrumental in creating environmental contexts that have become progressively more hostile to terrorist designs by promoting nascent reform in civil governance and expanding local infrastructure and employment and education opportunities. These efforts are beginning to bear particular dividends in Java and the southern Philippines, where police and military forces are now benefiting from better-quality grassroots intelligence sourced from local populaces that are both more trusting of and more willing to work with (rather than against) official agents of the state.

That said, the United States still confronts multiple challenges in effectively instituting its security and defense assistance. First,

³² It should be noted that progress in Indonesian law enforcement also reflects the intensive security assistance efforts of Australia. Some notable initiatives that have been underwritten by Canberra include the establishment of JCLEC; a multinational operational task force; a five-nation shared information management and dissemination system that also involves Thailand, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Singapore; a bomb and analysis archiving center; a deradicalization and prison reform program (jointly funded at a level of A\$900,000, with the latter effort being coordinated in conjunction with the Asia Foundation); and the provision of technological assistance and training to help Detachment 88 with surveillance, communication monitoring, DNA analysis, and forensic investigations (author interviews, Jakarta, November 2007, and Adelaide, April 2008).

recipient-country law enforcement and intelligence sectors suffer, to varying degrees, from bloated bureaucracies, stovepiping, and confused chains of command. Many organizations have overlapping or poorly delineated responsibilities and lack appropriate mechanisms for assembling multiagency task forces to deal with threats that cross jurisdictional boundaries and mandates. These shortcomings have been especially marked in the TNP and PNP,³³ and, despite the successes of Detachment 88, they continue to beset Indonesia.³⁴

Second, several countries have placed conditions on outside security assistance. In the Philippines, for instance, CT aid has generally been endorsed only for the fight against the ASG Islamic militancy, with Manila insistent that it should not be used to underwrite operations against MILF or the CPP-NPA, which the government regards as a purely internal affair.³⁵ Similarly, Thailand remains highly sensitive to outside involvement in the conflict in its southern provinces and has consistently rejected any external assistance for its CT and COIN operations there.³⁶

Third, security assistance necessarily needs to go beyond the law enforcement and military sectors and embrace a whole-of-government approach. While Washington certainly appreciates the importance of fully institutionalizing this holistic view in the various programs it oversees in Southeast Asia, few recipient countries have been willing to acknowledge that their entire system of policy- and decisionmaking

³³ Author interview, Washington, D.C., December 2007.

³⁴ Author interviews, Washington, D.C., and Adelaide, December 2007 and April 2008. As noted in Chapter Eight, in Indonesia, there is no clear division of responsibility for CT between the police and military, largely due to legal inconsistencies arising out of laws passed post-2002. Further compounding the potential for organizational conflict is TNI's ongoing dissatisfaction over the amount of resources that the United States has invested in POLRI, which senior army commanders insist has come at the expense of underwriting necessary "green" missions, such as long-range reconnaissance and COIN.

³⁵ Author interviews, Zamboanga, January 2008.

³⁶ Author interviews, Bangkok, April 2008. In 2007, the government circulated a notice that explicitly stated that security assistance should be framed in terms of general capacity building and should neither be referenced as assisting efforts against Malay Muslim separatists nor be used to support CT training in the southern border provinces.

is in need of fixing and that outside parties may be the most suitable vehicles for achieving this. This has placed a “political ceiling” on the scope and nature of support that the United States has been able to supply to the region, which, in many cases, has necessarily been narrowed to take into account only hard security considerations. As one DoD official remarked, such an orientation is unlikely to achieve satisfactory results, much less elicit a fully comprehensive outcome: “You can have the most effective military, police, and intelligence sector in the world; however, if it is not managed by an equally proficient political structure, it will never fulfill its true potential.”³⁷

Fourth, several DoS representatives have observed that the overall utility of ATA and INCLE/ICITAP has suffered from the slow progress of comprehensive police reform in certain Southeast Asian countries. In Indonesia, for example, POLRI has demonstrated some hesitancy in taking on board new concepts that do not correlate to (predetermined) nationalistic or Muslim perspectives.³⁸ Equally, in the Philippines, although the PNP is working to meet the 10 goals outlined in its transformation program, progress is being undermined by the frequency of changes in upper-level management. As noted in Chapter Seven, organizational priorities, agendas, and directions invariably accompany the appointment of a new director general—many of whom are rotated out of office in nine to 12 months.

However, it is perhaps in Thailand where problems of this sort have been greatest, reflecting a law enforcement culture that works against even incremental change.³⁹ As several U.S. government officials in both Washington and Bangkok remarked, one glaring deficiency is the TNP’s continuing reliance on confessions (rather than

³⁷ Author interview, Washington, D.C., December 2007.

³⁸ Author interviews, Washington, D.C., December 2007.

³⁹ It should be noted that, according to one RTA officer, there has been limited progress in TNP reform. Police chiefs at both the district and subdistrict levels are now younger, and all must have at least five years of investigative experience in the south. This commentator also believes that active steps are now being taken to discipline law enforcement officials implicated in human rights abuses and corruption cases. The extent to which these changes permeate the TNP as an organization, however, remains unclear (author interview, Bangkok, April 2008).

documented physical or forensic evidence—a problem that is also evident in the Philippines) when preparing cases for criminal prosecution. Undertaken in an attempt to try to secure rapid convictions, these self-admissions rarely bear fruit, as most are thrown out of court because they are either forced or extracted under questionable circumstances.⁴⁰

Fifth, and on a more micro level, the dividend of stand-alone CT courses has often been undermined by the inability of recipient forces to effectively absorb imparted learning modules. Again, Thailand provides a case in point. Here, IED training has yielded only limited results, largely because there is no single standard governing post-blast bomb investigations.⁴¹ Difficulties have also been manifest in the Philippines, where officers dispatched to attend a particular program of instruction may not necessarily be returned to the originating division for which the training was developed. This type of post-course redeployment is problematic because the individual in question has no way to maintain learned skills or, just as importantly, the opportunity to impart acquired knowledge to others.⁴²

Sixth, statutory obstacles have prevented the comprehensive implementation of certain assistance programs. In Thailand, for example, efforts to institute a rigorous regime for countering money laundering have been held hostage to a freewheeling economy that has been “nurtured” by Bangkok’s failure to either sign the UN Convention for the Suppression of Financing Terrorism or pass a suite of fiscal/banking laws that meet international standards.⁴³ Statutory issues have also arisen in Indonesia, especially in terms of instituting appropriate judicial responses to terrorism. In this case, progress has been held up

⁴⁰ Author interviews, Washington, D.C., December 2007, and Bangkok, April 2008. In the words of one INCLE program officer, “There is a general perception in Washington that Thailand has plateaued in terms of its willingness to promote meaningful and comprehensive law enforcement reform.”

⁴¹ Author interviews, Washington, D.C., December 2007.

⁴² Author interviews, Washington, D.C., December 2007, and Manila, January 2008.

⁴³ Author interviews, Washington, D.C., and Phnom Penh, December 2007 and January 2008. Of the countries covered in this study, only the Philippines has signed the UN Convention on the Suppression of Financing Terrorism, though Manila has yet to ratify the accord (see DoS, 2007b).

by the fact that Jakarta has yet to pass a suite of comprehensive anti-terrorism legislation. As noted earlier, the United States is currently trying to deal with this problem through its resident legal advisor program, which is currently directed at helping the Indonesian state develop appropriate frameworks for identifying and punishing terrorists.

Seventh, resource constraints have similarly had an impact on the full execution of security initiatives in recipient host nations. Very much indicative of this have been the problems that both the Philippines and Indonesia have encountered in covering the expenses associated with putting in place integrated and fully digitized communication systems to link their respective ports of entry. These limits have directly hindered U.S. efforts to augment border security in the two states, not least because they are a fundamental to fully implementing S/CT's TIP program.⁴⁴

Finally, pervasive corruption has placed a fixed limit on the total scale of security support that the United States is willing or able to supply and underwrite. This is true of all three critical states discussed in this monograph and, in the opinion of various officials in Washington, remains one of the more intractable limiting factors currently besetting U.S. assistance efforts in Southeast Asia.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Author interviews, Washington, D.C., December 2007.

⁴⁵ Author interviews, Washington, D.C., December 2007.

Conclusion

The Current Terrorist Environment in Southeast Asia

Overall, the terrorist environment in the three critical countries discussed in this monograph appears, if not benign, at least manageable. In Thailand, it is certainly true that the scale and scope of Malay Muslim violence has become more acute in nature and taken on an explicitly religious bent not witnessed in the past. That said, there is no present indication of this conflict expanding to a broader national level, with the objective continuing to be defined in uniquely local terms. More importantly, it would seem that outside demagogues and radicals have largely failed to gain a concerted logistical or ideological foothold in the region, which should militate against metastasizing the southern border provinces into a new hub of militant transregional jihadism.

In the Philippines, the extant threat of Moro Muslim extremism is today perhaps lower than it has ever been. The ASG currently has no broadly accepted emir to provide organizational or operational direction, with the bulk of its existing cadres confined mostly to isolated pockets in Tawi-Tawi and Jolo. The MBG likewise remains factionalized and strategically disaggregated and probably numbers no more than 660 hard-core dissidents scattered across the Sulu archipelago. Perhaps most significantly, the largest and best-equipped Moro rebel group, MILF, has been prepared to engage Manila in peace talks and, at least with respect to its leadership and mainstream, appears sincere in its desire to reach a comprehensive settlement sooner rather than later.

Currently, the most serious threat in the Philippines emanates from the CPP-NPA, which retains a thin but national presence and has managed to penetrate an assortment of institutional state structures through its legitimate front, the NDF. However, the communist armed wing has witnessed a steady decline in numbers and available weapon stocks and is exhibiting an increasingly questionable ability to fully control the *barangays* that it has infiltrated (which presently amount to only 5 percent of the country's total). Moreover, the CPP's central committee has suffered from the neutralization of several senior officials in recent years—12 in 2007 alone—and is beset by a chairman (Jose Maria Sison) who is both old and exiled. According to AFP officials, only 30 percent of the communist campaign is now devoted to armed struggle—a percentage ratio that is expected to have further diminished by the year 2010 (when the military expects to announce a strategic victory over the CPP-NPA).¹

Of the three focus states discussed in this monograph, it is the situation in Indonesia that is most open to flux. On the one hand, the latent threat posed by Islamist radicalism has definitely declined since 2000, reflecting both more effective CT actions on the part of the police (especially Detachment 88) and widespread popular disillusionment generated by attacks that have disproportionately affected Muslim interests. On the other hand, an undercurrent of support for the institution of strict Islamic order remains in Indonesia, which, under the right circumstances, could spark a resurgence of JI/DI-instigated fundamentalism across the country. Moreover, there is a persistent danger of militant “self-induction” through the Internet, and radicalism continues to be a significant problem in prisons, a result of both the porous nature of state penitentiaries and relatively short detention terms that do not provide sufficient time for the effective rehabilitation of convicted inmates. Finally, there is an ongoing possibility that returning Islamist alumni from South Asia and the Middle East will seek to breathe new life into indigenous fringe elements by impressing

¹ If achieved, this would reduce the CPP-NPA's overall strength, capability, and influence by 75 percent (author interviews, Zamboanga, January 2008).

credos that forcefully reject respect and tolerance for democracy, secularism, modernity, and religious cohabitation.

The situation in Indonesia also has direct relevance for the future of cross-border terrorism in Southeast Asia, not least because the country plays host to JI. Although this network has been weakened by the arrests of several leading mid-level commanders and internal debates over the utility of large-scale, indiscriminate bombings, it has demonstrated a proven capacity to adapt and will probably never be fully expunged as a movement of radical ideas. As noted, Indonesia could still provide a suitable context for a resurgence of JI activism, which, while initially focused on the national Islamist struggle, will still see the institution of a pan-regional caliphate as the ultimate goal. Moreover, Indonesia (together with the Philippines) continues to harbor some of Southeast Asia's most wanted terrorists. So long as these individuals remain at large, the possibility of mass, civilian-targeted attacks and suicide strikes can never be discounted.

As noted in the Chapter One, a true assessment of the current terrorism environment in Southeast Asia necessarily has to take into account the nature and appropriateness of state responses. Again, there is reason for guarded optimism here. In Thailand, there is at least an indication that the government has become somewhat more appreciative of soft hearts-and-minds and dialogue-based approaches in dealing with the current Malay Muslim conflict. Primarily instituted by the CNS military regime that seized power from Prime Minister Thaksin's Thai Rak Thai party in 2006, the overall thrust of this more nuanced tack has continued with the return to civilian rule in 2008. Long-term success in southern Thailand will depend on whether Bangkok demonstrates the necessary commitment to (1) address continuing structural and operational weaknesses in the security forces—not least as they pertain to intelligence collection and stovepiping, postattack forensic investigations, and integrating individual and wider strategic planning—and (2) genuinely empower local Malay Muslims and ensure that they are adequately equipped to guide their own political, cultural, and religious future.

In the Philippines, the AFP has made steady progress in terms of defense reform and civil-military relations and is now reaping signifi-

cant rewards in the ongoing battle against Islamist and Moro extremists in Mindanao. However, numerous problems continue to beset the police, including corruption, a dearth of resources,² nepotism, jurisdictional confusion and conflict borne of an inflated bureaucracy, insufficient integration between the AFP and PNP as well as niche areas of police work, and an upper management structure that is both inconsistent and prone to frequent fluctuation.³

Many of the issues that afflict the police in the Philippines also have salience in Indonesia. However, in the latter case, Jakarta has fully committed to professionalizing POLRI and ensuring that it is *internationally* recognized as an adept and accountable force. To this end, moves have been made to tackle corruption (though this is a problem that will take many years to completely root out) and develop more comprehensive investigative frameworks for addressing serious criminal activity (including terrorism). In addition, the government is starting to build a reasonably proficient computer-based forensics capability (achieved with Australian assistance); is slowly augmenting what hitherto have been highly weak coastal surveillance capabilities (thanks to 1207 funds, the marine component of POLRI is now able to engage in limited brown-water monitoring and patrol activities); has (albeit gradually) recognized the need for a concerted deradicalization program in prisons; and, most significantly, has actively institutionalized a credible and effective CT unit in the guise of Detachment 88.

Policy Recommendations

Taking the aforementioned observations into account and drawing on the broad analysis presented in this monograph, seven policy recommendations can be made with respect to U.S. CT security assistance in Southeast Asia.

² Some 90 percent of the PNP's financing comes from non-congressional sources, which further aggravates the potential for kickbacks and embezzlement (author interview, Washington, D.C., December 2007).

³ Author interviews, Washington, D.C., December 2007.

First, Washington should focus more adroitly on addressing the general issue of corruption in the region. This is critical not only for overcoming the limiting factor regarding U.S. security assistance noted at the end of Chapter Nine (that is, pervasive corruption), but also for fostering popular confidence in elected officials, bureaucrats, and other entrusted agents of the state. The United States should make it absolutely clear that future allocations of defense aid and support are directly tied to recipient nations meeting specific standards of accountability or otherwise instituting verifiable programs of government reform as articulated by prominent organizations, such as Transparency International. In addition, all assistance should be channeled in directions that are least likely to cause political problems in the target country or be redirected by corrupt officials. The best means of ensuring such an outcome is to minimize investments of cash or, at least, make them as transparent (and, hence, as publicly accountable) as possible.⁴

Second, the United States needs to focus on promoting more concerted police reform in the Philippines and Thailand. While this could be done through the current suite of bilateral ATA, INCLE, and ICITAP assistance offered by DoS, it probably makes more sense to sponsor a somewhat broader program of professional training through nascent but proven multilateral arrangements, such as the JCLEC in Semarang,⁵ the Southeast Asia Regional Centre for Counter-Terrorism (SEARCCT) in Kuala Lumpur,⁶ and the International Law Enforce-

⁴ Author interviews, Washington, D.C., December 2007.

⁵ JCLEC commenced operations in February 2004. As noted in Chapter Nine, it is essentially an Australia-funded initiative, with Canberra providing A\$36.8 million over five years (that is, to 2009) to meet the center's running costs. The Australian Federal Police describes JCLEC as a "fantastic" facility and generally views it as one of the most successful assistance programs presently being underwritten in Indonesia (author interview, Adelaide, April 2008). For more information, see JCLEC, 2005.

⁶ SEARCCT was formally launched in July 2003 under the purview of the Malaysian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It acts as a regional CT center, focusing on training and capacity building as well as public awareness programs. For more information, see SEARCCT, 2009.

ment Academy (ILEA) in Bangkok.⁷ All of these structures are now playing an important role in terms of formalizing executive management courses and workshops for both senior and middle-ranking police officers and all have been active in seeking to underwrite more effective protocols for information sharing and dissemination. Arguably more significant, however, is the fact that they offer the major advantage of bringing practitioners together in a single organizational setting where professional networks can be built and ideas and perspectives on terrorism and CT can be exchanged and debated. In short, they offer a highly viable conduit to foster greater law enforcement professionalism and a means through which to generate greater police collaboration, understanding, and trust.

Third, and in many ways following on from the previous two recommendations, Washington could usefully reconsider the role of regional institutions in helping to foster a less benign environment for terrorism in Southeast Asia. The preferred policy of the Bush administration since 9/11 was to deal with the individual needs and concerns of host nations by engaging them in a hub-and-spokes approach rather than multilateral initiatives, such as ASEAN, the ASEAN Regional Forum, the East Asia Summit, and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation. It is certainly true that procedural norms—namely, the twin emphasis on unanimity and noninterference in internal affairs—have historically served to undermine the effectiveness of collaborative security formulation in these various institutional arrangements. However, there are signs of a greater awareness on the part of Southeast Asian states that such transnational issues as terrorism must be dealt with on a multilateral basis and that existing regional forums are the best means for achieving this. Calls for future security decisionmaking to be predicated on qualified majority voting (a move long supported by the Philippines and Singapore and, increasingly, Indonesia; see, e.g.,

⁷ ILEA commenced operations in 1998. It was originally set up as a DoS initiative to enhance regional cooperation against illicit drug trafficking, financial crime, and alien smuggling, which were then considered the principal transnational security threats confronting Southeast Asia. Since 2001, however, the focus has progressively moved to CT, with the ILEA increasingly working in conjunction with JCLEC and SEARCCT (author interview, Bangkok, April 2008). For more information, see ILEA Bangkok, undated.

Wanandi, 2008), together with the signing of the ASEAN Charter and the Bali Concord II are all indicative that member-state governments are now more prepared to work together for the good of their community as a whole (see, e.g., “New Power Dynamics in Southeast Asia,” 2007, p. 1). The United States should actively support these efforts. Channeling security and CT assistance through collaborative frameworks will not only help reduce the perception that terrorism is exclusively a U.S. problem, it will also provide Washington with an opportunity to buttress indigenous capabilities in areas where it is unable to operate bilaterally for political or logistical reasons.

Fourth, the United States should press all 10 ASEAN member states to sign and ratify each of the 16 UN conventions dealing with CT. Although political agreement was reached at the Jakarta Sub-Regional Ministerial Meeting in March 2007 on the need to strengthen legal CT instruments,⁸ the fact remains that many Southeast Asian countries have yet to enact a broad range of conventions and protocols relating to terrorism. As Table 10.1 shows, these include accords on plastic explosives, terrorist bombings, terrorist financing, and nuclear terrorism.

Fifth, the United States should emphasize the use of “soft” power in its assistance efforts, particularly with regard to enhancing the capacity of local governance (through INCLE), fostering greater military and police awareness of human rights and rules of engagement (through sponsored IMET courses), and promoting general socioeconomic development (through ESF). The experience of Thailand, the Philippines, and Indonesia graphically highlights the payoff that these types of endeavors can have in terms of winning local trust and confidence. As the Stanley Foundation observes, it is this kind of goodwill support—not the provision of “hard” combat equipment and training—that has been especially welcomed by indigenous

⁸ The meeting, which was jointly organized by Australia and Indonesia, built on the Bali process that was first initiated in February 2002. Participants from Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines, and Singapore discussed a broad range of policy issues relating to terrorist groups in the region, ways of enhancing CT law enforcement, and future challenges in collaborative decisionmaking. For more details, see Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, undated.

Table 10.1

Southeast Asian Ratification of International Conventions and Protocols on Terrorism

Convention or Protocol	Country									
	Brunei	Cambodia	Indonesia	Laos	Malaysia	Myanmar	Philippines	Singapore	Thailand	Vietnam
Convention on Offences and Certain Other Acts Committed on Board Aircraft	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Seizure of Aircraft	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts Against the Safety of Civil Aviation	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Protocol for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts of Violence at Airports Serving International Civil Aviation	X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X
Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Crimes Against Internationally Protected Persons, Including Diplomatic Agents	X	X		X		X	X		X	
International Convention Against the Taking of Hostages		X	X		X		X			

Table 10.1—Continued

Convention or Protocol	Country									
	Brunei	Cambodia	Indonesia	Laos	Malaysia	Myanmar	Philippines	Singapore	Thailand	Vietnam
Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X
2005 Amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material	X	X			X	X	X	X		X
Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts Against the Safety of Maritime Navigation	X	X			X	X	X		X	X
Protocol of 2005 to the Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts Against the Safety of Maritime Navigation					X	X	X	X	X	
Protocol for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts Against the Safety of Fixed Platforms Located on the Continental Shelf	X	X	X	X		X	X		X	

Table 10.1—Continued

Convention or Protocol	Country									
	Brunei	Cambodia	Indonesia	Laos	Malaysia	Myanmar	Philippines	Singapore	Thailand	Vietnam
Protocol of 2005 to the Protocol for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts Against the Safety of Fixed Platforms Located on the Continental Shelf	X	X	X			X	X	X		X
Convention on the Marking of Plastic Explosives for the Purpose of Detection										
International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings										
International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism										
International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism										

SOURCE: DoS, 2008d.

communities in conflict-ridden regions and, hence, most successful in alienating latent militant sympathies and tendencies. To ensure that these types of endeavors have a long-term, sustainable impact, it is critical that they adopt a fully participatory character and are undertaken with due regard for community consultation in civic action planning (ICG, 2008b, p. 22).⁹

Sixth, Washington could usefully supplement the use of soft power with “smart” power by (1) spearheading public diplomacy, exchange, and educational efforts to alienate and discredit perverted interpretations of Islam and associated pan-regional extremist designs; (2) empowering moderate Muslim leaders as voices for greater religious negotiation and tolerance by facilitating regular interfaith delegations, both in the United States and in Southeast Asia; (3) investigating possible alternatives for reducing the pull of pan-regional sentiment from “the inside out,” not least by ascertaining the extent to which emergent fissures between JI’s mainstream and the pro-bombing faction can be exploited; and (4) promoting prison reform and reducing the potential of jails to be exploited as recruitment or radicalization hubs (which, as noted in Chapter Four, remains a serious problem in Indonesia).

Dialogue and communication initiatives should not focus solely on Southeast Asian states with established militant Islamic entities but also concentrate on those countries that could foster or otherwise encourage hard-line Muslim sentiments. Notable in this regard is Malaysia, where numerous well-informed commentators have argued that a troubling “enabling environment” may be emerging as a result of the polemics of the ruling United Malays National Organisation. In the opinion of these observers, attempts by the governing party to win the ethnic Malay vote in order to outflank the opposition Parti Islam se-Malaysia have dangerously politicized the domestic religious debate—not least by giving greater institutional expression and latitude to a more fundamentalist ideology. Perhaps the best indication of this has been the growing influence of HuT. According to various sources in Kuala Lumpur, the organization is not only making

⁹ For an analysis of the implications of failing to ensure effective community buy-in for these types of initiatives, see Cragin and Chalk, 2003.

increasingly decisive inroads into Malay society, it is also now actively recruiting from prominent tertiary educational institutions, such as the Malaysian University of Technology, a significant past source of both al-Qaeda and JI militants.¹⁰

Finally, added focus could be given to identifying and supporting conventional and nonconventional broadcasting and message delivery systems that can be effectively utilized in a multilayered communication environment by both internal and external audiences. As the statistics in Table 10.2 denote, there is ample room for media and broadcasting networks to be employed as tools of public diplomacy or propaganda in the three Southeast Asian countries considered in this analysis. Properly employed, these conduits could be highly effective in prosecuting the “struggle of ideas”—not least by targeting and influencing those sectors that are most able to bolster the middle ground of political compromise and, through this, foster an environment that is hostile (or at least nonreceptive) to the appeal of violent Islam.¹¹ To the extent possible, these types of activities should be refined and executed in direct collaboration with local Islamic community leaders and elders to mitigate the danger of their being dismissed as self-interested U.S. propaganda.

¹⁰ Author interviews, Kuala Lumpur, September 2006. Besides the influence of HuT, several other indicators of a heightened Islamic zeal in Malaysia have been highlighted, including (1) moves to formulate a faith-protection bill (known as the Islamiah Aqidah Protection Bill) legislating against apostasy; (2) internal United Malays National Organisation discussions on the possibility of introducing constitutional reforms declaring the Koran and Sunnah as the source of federal law; (3) repeated raids against popular nightspots and bars by Jabatan Agama Islam Wilayah Persekutuan (the Federal Territories Religious Department) officers; (4) establishment of the so-called Pasukan Gerak Khas Belia 4B (4B Youth Movement) to spy on fellow Muslims and report their social activities to state religious authorities; and (5) the issuance of an edict from the country’s top Islamic body, the National Fatwa Council, banning Muslims from practicing yoga on the grounds that elements in the ancient Indian exercise could corrupt them (author interviews, Kuala Lumpur, September 2006; see also “Muslims Barred from Practicing Yoga,” 2008).

¹¹ Comments made during the U.S. Pacific Command Southeast Asia Violent Ideology Strategy Seminar, San Antonio, Tex., October 31–November 1, 2006; see also Manyin et al., 2004, p. 33, and 9/11 Commission Report, 2004, pp. 375–377.

Table 10.2**Popular Access to Media and Broadcasting Outlets in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand (per 1,000 population)**

Country	TV	Radio	Computers	Cell Phones	Internet
Indonesia	153	159	13.6	211	71.8
Philippines	182	161	44.6	395	53.2
Thailand	300	235	58.3	430	111.0

SOURCE: Statistics presented during the U.S. Pacific Command Southeast Asia Violent Strategy Seminar, San Antonio, Tex., October 31–November 1, 2006.

Exploring the Potential for Emergent Operational and Logistical Terrorist Hubs in Cambodia

In October 2004, the chairman of the United Nations Security Council 1267 Sanctions Committee, Heraldo Muñoz, warned that Cambodia was in danger of becoming a “breeding ground for terrorists” due to a lack of CT capacity. He went on to claim that the country’s Muslims had become increasingly radicalized as a result of discrimination, noting several “reports of violence” in the nation’s south (United Nations, 2004). The committee’s statement, and the conviction of a group of terrorists associated with JI in a Phnom Penh court later that year, sparked concerns that Cambodia could potentially join the Philippines and Indonesia as a regional jihadist incubator (see, e.g., S. Brown, 2005). Fortunately, Cambodia has not emerged as either a militant recruiting ground or logistical hub. While the country has a seemingly terrorist-friendly environment, the relatively pacific and tolerant nature of its Islamic community and the government’s ability to exercise tight internal control work against the spread of violent extremism.

This appendix discusses three aspects of the overall terrorism environment in Cambodia. First, it considers the country’s potential to become a sanctuary and theater of operations for international terrorists and the extent to which their activities could be enabled by extant criminal elements. Second, it assesses the potential for radicalization of the Cham and Malay Muslim communities. Finally, it evaluates efforts on the part of the central administration in Phnom Penh to dampen and constrain extremist violence. While each of these features is treated discretely, many of their elements overlap and thus should be considered as interrelated.

Cambodia as a Potential Terrorist Operating Theater

Writing in 2004, a Cambodian journalist concluded that the country was “a convenient base from which to launder money, buy arms, forge documents, and perform any number of other tasks crucial to the smooth running of illegal activities” (Thrupkaew, 2004). In many ways, that judgment holds true today. Although border-control measures implemented with U.S. and Australian assistance in recent years have had some positive effect, significant stretches of the country’s land and sea borders remain porous, making the movement of weapons, material, and personnel comparatively easy. Certainly, erratic frontier surveillance has contributed to Cambodia’s exploitation by foreign terrorists and outside religious demagogues in the past. In 2003, for example, the architect of the October 2002 Bali bombing, Riduan Isamuddin (aka Hambali) managed to bypass immigration formalities and rent a guesthouse in Phnom Penh. For several months, he used this as a central base of operations, spending much of his time in the Cambodian capital attempting to establish a regional headquarters for JI (an endeavor that ultimately proved unsuccessful) (Baker, 2003). Religious extremists from Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Malaysia, and other parts of the Muslim world are similarly known to have evaded frontier border checks on a number of occasions, with several being subsequently identified as complicit in efforts to “re-Islamize” Cambodia’s minority Cham and Malay populations (which many Salafists deem insufficiently orthodox in their approach to the faith).

Structurally, while the police and the military continue to receive CT assistance from abroad, the capacity of the security forces remains limited.¹ This problem has been exacerbated by a lack of comprehensive domestic CT legislation, which has greatly impeded the government’s general ability to arrest and prosecute terrorists (DoS, 2007b).

Cambodia has also witnessed a substantial growth in foreign tourism and overseas investment (attracted by a real estate boom) over the

¹ Author interviews, Phnom Penh, January 2008.

past five years. Although beneficial from a domestic fiscal standpoint,² these influxes have contributed to the emergence of numerous soft targets typifying the civilian-centric and economically strategic venues to which terrorists have routinely been drawn in the post-9/11 era.

Finally and perhaps most importantly, widespread criminal activity and official corruption have created a conducive operational environment for potential terrorists. Given a dollarized economy, a robust informal banking sector, and lax financial controls, international terrorists (and criminals) would, at the very least, view Cambodia as an attractive place to launder money.³ Moreover, with vast stockpiles of small arms left over from the Khmer Rouge era, the country has also reportedly served as an “arms bazaar” for terrorist and insurgent groups fighting in conflict zones as far afield as Sri Lanka, the Philippines, Indonesia, Kashmir, and northeast India (Wille, 2006, p. 27; “Cambodia PM Pledges to Stop the Arms Flow to Sri Lankan Rebels,” 2006). Because the nexus between crime and terrorism is so widely discussed, its potential salience in the Cambodian context is taken up in more detail next.

Terrorism and Crime: The Potential Link in Cambodia

Organized crime can serve as a key enabler for terrorist activity. Indeed, involvement with illegal drugs—whether in the form of “taxation” on traffickers or through the direct production and sale of narcotics—has helped finance groups as diverse as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, the Madrid railway bombers, and the Kurdistan Work-

² Together with garment manufacturing, these influxes have helped generate annual economic growth rates of up to 10 percent in recent years. That said, Cambodia remains one of the poorest countries in the world with one of the widest gaps between the rich and poor; over a third of the population lives on less than \$0.50 per day (see Mydans, 2008b, and “Activists Say CPP Victory Could Hurt Reform Effort,” 2008).

³ Indeed, according to one prominent newspaper publisher, North Korea—a country designated by the U.S. government as a state sponsor of terrorism—routinely launders funds in Cambodia (author interview, Phnom Penh, January 2008). For more on money laundering in Cambodia, see DoS, 2007a.

er's Party. While crime can certainly pose risks to the perpetrating organization—not least by drawing the attention of the police and other agencies of law and order—it does represent a proven and ready means for underwriting, sustaining, and projecting militant operational capabilities, often at great cost to the targeted country (Clutterbuck, 2007, p. 6). Breaking the terrorism-crime nexus—or, ideally, preventing it from forming in the first place—is thus a critical CT mission.

Three specific manifestations of organized crime and their actual or latent interaction with terrorism would seem to have particular relevance in Cambodia: the illegal weapons trade, money laundering, and drug trafficking. However, while all of these offenses exist as serious law enforcement problems, to date, there is little evidence that they have served as a significant source of financing for international terrorism.

The Illegal Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons

During the 1980s, armed political groups opposed to the communist regime of Democratic Kampuchea established and built up huge caches of arms and ammunitions. Following the end of the civil war in 1991, factional control over these stockpiles waned and vast quantities of munitions bled out into Cambodian society. The ready supply of armaments, combined with the country's freewheeling environment, subsequently transformed Cambodia into a weapon marketplace for a number of former and current Asian insurgent and terrorist groups, including GAM in Indonesia;⁴ the NPA, ASG, and MILF in the Philippines; and, most notoriously, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in Sri Lanka.⁵ Overall, it is estimated that as many as 10,000 weapons may have been exported from Cambodia to armed groups during the 1990s (Wille, 2006, p. 27; Webb-Vidal and Davis, 2008, pp. 14–15).

Over the past 10 years, however, Cambodia's position as a weapon supplier to international terrorists and insurgents has diminished.

⁴ Following the signing of the Helsinki MoU with the Indonesian government on August 15, 2005, GAM ceased to formally exist as a terrorist/insurgent group.

⁵ It has been estimated that Cambodia is the source of between 5 and 10 percent of the Tamil Tigers' total weapon stockpile (see Wille, 2006, p. 28).

This reflects both the Hun Sen regime's eagerness to promote itself as a responsible international citizen and its desire to reduce the potential for political instability at home. With assistance from the EU and Japan, the central government has removed civil war-era guns from uncontrolled circulation, cracked down on weapon bazaars, destroyed all 233 SAM-7 Strela man-portable air defense systems held in military stocks,⁶ instituted control measures intended to prevent leakages and unauthorized exports, and passed legislation banning the distribution, trading, or hiring of stockpiled arms or ammunition (Small Arms Survey, 2007). According to General Cham Kim Seng, director of the weapon control department of Cambodia's Ministry of National Defense, over 200,000 munitions had been permanently taken out of circulation by the end of June 2007 (Webb-Vidal and Davis, 2008, p. 15).

Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing

By any measure, Cambodia is a minor regional financial center. However, the lack of law enforcement resources, expertise, and control measures—combined with a heavily cash-based, dollarized economy—has transformed Cambodia into what Washington has termed a “major” money-laundering country. Exacerbating the situation has been the establishment of close ties between banking interests and casinos, which by providing an additional conduit for funneling illicit funds, has weakened Cambodia's financial regulatory capabilities and reduced transparency in an already opaque banking system (DoS, 2008d). While there is no hard evidence that international terrorists have systematically moved to exploit Cambodia as a venue for money laundering or other illicit financial activities, Phnom Penh has recognized the obvious potential for such a contingency and has, as a result, sought to enact measures specifically designed to monitor and control illicit financial movements into and out of the country. With the help of the United States and other countries, Cambodia has pro-

⁶ The decision to destroy the Strela SAM-7s was largely in response to rumors (and related U.S. pressure) that JI had attempted to acquire them in the run up to the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit held in Bangkok in October 2003.

mulgated legislation to fight money laundering and terrorism financing and establish a national financial investigation unit with mandated authority over non-banking institutions, such as casinos and hotels. Cambodian parliamentarians have also called for a ban on the use of the dollar on the grounds that this is the currency of choice for many organized crime syndicates, given its universal value and ease of transfer abroad (McDermid and Sokha, 2007).⁷ Despite these moves and pronouncements, there is still no effective oversight of international financial transactions (DoS, 2008d). Indeed, there is reason to believe that elements both inside and outside the country have a direct interest in ensuring that financial controls remain lax. For example, companies engaged in illegal logging are known to “back-pay” members of the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces and the police. According to one NGO, these financial inducements are typically designed to “provide protection against law enforcement and are passed up the chain of command from junior officers to superiors, and ultimately to senior officers in the capital” (Small Arms Survey, 2007, English summary, p. 2).⁸ An effective financial control regime would pose an obvious threat to such illicit transactions.

Drug Trafficking

Crackdowns in China and Thailand have forced drug traffickers to seek alternate shipment routes, and increasing volumes of illegal narcotics and precursor chemicals are now moving through Cambodia by land, sea, and air (DoS, 2008c). At the same time, the country has emerged as a significant consumer and producer of illegal drugs in its own right. As a general rule, cocaine and ecstasy flow into the country, while heroin and methamphetamines are shipped out (Mussomeli, 2006). The overall scale of the problem was revealed in April 2007, when a police raid on a methamphetamine laboratory in Kampong Speu province resulted in 18 arrests and the seizure of six tons of precursor chemicals (UNODC, undated). As with other areas of its national security, Cambodian counternarcotics efforts are hindered by limited

⁷ Cambodia’s official currency is the riel.

⁸ For more on this subject, see Global Witness, 2007.

resources, a lack of training, and poor coordination among government departments and agencies (DoS, 2008c). Nevertheless, although drug trafficking is clearly emerging as a social and law enforcement problem for Cambodia, there is no evidence that the illicit drug trade is being accessed by terrorists to fund their activities.

Cambodia's Muslims: The Potential for Radicalization

Cambodia's Cham ethnic group and the much smaller number of ethnic Malays make up what is known officially as Khmer Islam.⁹ The precise number of Muslims in the country is unknown, with estimates ranging from 300,000 to 700,000 out of a total population of roughly 14 million people. One authoritative estimate by Bjørn Blengsli, a Norwegian anthropologist who is one of the few researchers to have conducted extensive fieldwork among Cambodia's Muslim communities, puts the low-end figure at 321,000, which would equate to roughly 2.3 percent of the national demographic base ("The Khmer Islam: Regional Security Threat," 2007). An estimated 414 of the country's 13,406 villages are predominantly Muslim (Blengsli, 2003; Iwan Baskoro et al., 2005, p. 47). However, unlike other Muslim-minority states in the region, such as Thailand and the Philippines, there is no indigenous Islamic heartland, even though many of the faithful consider Kampong Cham province to be their spiritual and cultural home.¹⁰

Khmer Islam is a syncretic faith that has borrowed from pre-Islamic traditions as well as certain non-Muslim belief systems, such as Hinduism. Many of the so-called "traditionalist" Cham belong to the *shafi'iyya* branch of Islam, which, while recognizing Allah as the supreme deity, also acknowledges the existence of other divine beings and engages in a variety of heterodox religious practices, including ritualism and magic. This synthesis, which is driven in large part by an ongoing desire to recapture and preserve past Cham culture and his-

⁹ For stylistic reasons, the terms *Cham*, *Malays*, and *Cambodian Muslim* are used interchangeably throughout this appendix.

¹⁰ Author interviews, Phnom Penh, January 2008.

tory, acts as a built-in barrier to single religious dominance and intolerance (Blengsli, 2003).¹¹

There are a number of potential sources of grievance among Cambodian Muslims. Many remain acutely conscious of the sufferings that their community endured under the Khmer Rouge regime. Known as the era of Democratic Kampuchea (1975–1978), this period witnessed wholesale massacres of the country's educated Islamic elite, who were seen to represent a direct threat to the virulent brand of chauvinistic nationalism propagated under the despotic rule of Pol Pot.¹² A growing number of Chams also appear to be worried about the perceived weakening of their cultural and linguistic traditions, with elders frequently expressing concern that the youth are losing touch with their unique ethnoreligious past and heritage.¹³ Moreover, most Muslims live a hardscrabble existence, with little economic opportunity beyond subsistence farming, fishing, and small-scale trading. Although tourism and foreign investment have increased substantially, associated fiscal benefits have not filtered down to the Chams or Malays who remain at the bottom of the economic ladder.¹⁴ Compounding these problems is a lack of adequate health care and a chronic shortage of teachers, books, and schools—all of which foster a sense of alienation and marginalization.

Despite the very real adverse situation that they face, Cambodian Muslims are notably apolitical. Those who are active in party politics or are prominent supporters of Prime Minister Hun Sen and his Cambodian People's Party are typically viewed with suspicion by many members of their community. Equally, with little or no access to newspapers or electronic media, Cham and Malays for the most part have no daily connection with the outside world. As a result, they have developed no real affinity with other Muslim-majority countries and have, instead, concentrated on reconciling their own situation in

¹¹ It should be noted that many of these nonorthodox practices are dying out among the Cham, though magic remains a feature of their traditional medicine.

¹² For more on the persecution of the Muslims during this period, see Osman, 2002.

¹³ Author interviews, Kampong Tralach and Stung Trong Districts, January 2008.

¹⁴ Author interviews, Phnom Penh, January 2008.

what remains an overwhelmingly Buddhist culture (Lyall, 2003). Just as significantly, while certainly eager to protect their traditions, there is no evidence of cultural chauvinism among Cambodian Muslims, who point with pride at their good relations with the society's majority population (Lewis, 1984, p. 43). Reflecting this disposition, Chams typically see themselves as Cambodians first and Muslims second and, as with other segments of the population, treat the king and royal family with respect, if not reverence ("The Khmer Islam: Regional Security Threat," 2007).

Perhaps most importantly, however, Cambodian Muslims do not appear to have any interest in aiding the armed struggles of their co-religionists abroad. In the words of one village elder, "God never told them to wage all these conflicts."¹⁵ This became apparent in 2007 following allegations by the Thai government that large numbers of individuals from Kampong Cham province were traveling to the "restive" Malay provinces of Yala, Narathiwat, and Pattani to aid separatist insurgents and were responsible for some of the more brutal beheadings taking place there. The claim, which ultimately proved unfounded, was vigorously rejected by Phnom Penh and generated a firestorm of protest across Cambodia, including, notably, among the Muslim population.¹⁶

The heterodoxy of Khmer Islam, its enduring tradition of religious tolerance, and the generally good state of relations between Cambodian Muslims and Buddhists have generated growing consternation among foreign Salafist missionaries and activist NGOs working in Cambodia. Arab charities, such as the Om Al Qura Charity Organization, the Islamic Development Bank, and the Revival of Islamic Heritage Society, have established Wahabbist schools and mosques in Cham communities and conspicuously used cash assistance and other blandishments to reward and encourage what one scholar terms

¹⁵ Author interview, Tralach District, January 2008.

¹⁶ Author interviews, Bangkok, July 2008; "Comments on 'Dangerous Cambodian Muslims' Upsets a Sensitive Neighbor," 2007; "Hiring Muslim Cambodians to Go to the South," 2007. While Cambodian Muslims have certainly passed through southern Thailand, very few are thought to have remained in the region, the vast majority consisting of economic migrants seeking a better life in Malaysia.

“religious punctiliousness” (quoted in Thrupkaew, 2004). Missionary (*da’wa*) groups like Jamaah Tabligh (known in Cambodia as Da’wa Tablighi) have also striven to propagate highly literalist approaches to Islam, teaching “people to exclude themselves from the rest of Cambodian society and tell them that they don’t fit in, that the modern world is an aberration, an offense, in other words, some form of blasphemy” (Blengsli, 2007). In addition, young Muslims are frequently encouraged to study abroad and undertake advanced religious instruction in states such as Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Malaysia.¹⁷

To be sure, there are indications that these efforts at proselytism have resulted in the spread of religious orthodoxy manifesting among the Cham. Not only are increasing numbers of pilgrims going on *hajj*—roughly 300 in 2007, up from 200 in 2006¹⁸—Salafist influence also appears to be growing. Indeed, according to Blengsli, more than half of the country’s Muslim schools are now dominated, or at least heavily influenced, by Wahhabist religious thought (Blengsli, 2006). Overall, however, attempts to re-Islamize Khmer Islam have created a backlash and resentment among many Chams. “Arabs criticize us for praying only once a day, and they say, if you want funds, you must follow us,” explained one village elder, using the generic Cham term for foreign Muslims.¹⁹ More importantly, while there are certainly signs of growing orthodoxy, as mentioned earlier, there is no evidence that this has led to violent militancy among the Cham.

The absence of a radical mass base manifesting within Khmer Islam can be attributed to a number of overlapping factors, some of which have already been mentioned. First, endemic poverty, rather than encouraging support for militancy, actually appears to dampen it. Put differently, terrorism is a form of armed politics, and for Cambodia’s impoverished Chams and Malays, this is a luxury they can ill afford. As one foreign observer explained, Cambodia’s Muslims “are

¹⁷ According to one prominent politician, in early 2008, some 60–70 Cambodian and Vietnamese Chams were studying in Saudi Arabia (author interview, Phnom Penh, January 2008; see also O’Connell and Saroeun, 2000).

¹⁸ Author interviews, Phnom Penh, January 2008.

¹⁹ Author interviews, Kampong Tralach District, January 2008.

really poor and do not have the time to commit to [militant radicalism]. They are just trying to survive" (Bugge, 2003). Second, a number of Chams oppose terrorism on the grounds that it could cause great harm to Cambodia and the Muslim population therein (as it has in Indonesia).²⁰ The third and perhaps the most important "disenablers" of violent extremism are the tenets of Khmer Islam itself. Not only does this particular ethnoreligious mindset expressly denigrate terrorism as a sin, it also contains specific theological, social, and cultural elements that serve as powerful "antibodies" to the development of violent jihadist worldviews.²¹

Internal Control in Cambodia

Cambodia has been an eager U.S. partner in the GWOT, an engagement that is motivated less by any inherent concern about the threats posed by international terrorism and more by a desire to reintegrate the state into the international community. With U.S. assistance, the Hun Sen regime has undertaken several initiatives designed to augment border surveillance and control, promote professionalism in the armed forces, and enhance the general rule of law. These programs, which are described in more detail in this section, have helped to increase the overall remit of the central government and enhance its general control of the country's territorial and maritime space.

Significantly, Cambodia has demonstrated an active willingness to crack down on suspected extremists while at the same time exhibiting awareness of the potential backlash that such actions might trigger. One notable case in point occurred in June 2003 when authorities arrested a Cham, two Thai Muslims, and an Egyptian suspected of involvement in a JI plot to attack the U.S. and British embassies in Phnom Penh. As part of the operation, a Saudi-funded religious school was shut down, resulting in the expulsion of 28 foreign teachers and their 22 dependents (Bainbridge and Sokheng, 2003; "Cambodia Con-

²⁰ Author interview, Phnom Penh, January 2008.

²¹ Author interview, Phnom Penh, January 2008.

victs Six Terrorist Suspects," 2004).²² To forestall potential opposition among Cambodia's wider Muslim population, and to maintain good relations with that community, Hun Sen publicly announced that the Chams were not the target of the crackdown, stressing that subsequent countermeasures were focused only on "the foreigners who have come to hide in our country" (quoted in Bainbridge and Sokheng, 2003).

Moreover, although technically democratic and seemingly attuned to the sensitivities of its Muslim minority, the Hun Sen regime has nevertheless demonstrated a number of explicit authoritarian tendencies, including a readiness to arrest critics of official policy, such as civic leaders, union organizers, and human rights activists (Lum, 2007a, pp. 5–6; Mydans, 2008b). A central enabling mechanism for this authoritarianism is the Cambodian People's Party—a party whose apparatus and influence extend from the capital to the most remote villages. While primarily intended to mobilize the population around elections, the party's structure also avails the regime with a unique ability to conduct surveillance on a truly national scale. This level of official scrutiny and local penetration in many ways offsets some of the aforementioned environmental features that potentially make Cambodia an attractive operational and logistical terrorist hub.

As noted earlier, Cambodian internal control has been facilitated in no small part by the provision of U.S. assistance, which has been disseminated in recognition of Phnom Penh's ardent support of the GWOT (DoS, 2006, p. 351). In FY 2006, a total of \$1,039,000 in FMF and IMET funds (\$990,000 and \$49,000, respectively) was provided to help modernize and professionalize the border and naval units of the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces and enhance their collective ability to mount effective surveillance over the country's land and sea frontiers with respect to countering piracy, terrorism, and drug trafficking. The combined requested allocation for FY 2007 stood at \$545,000 (DoS, 2006, pp. 351–352; see also Lum, 2007, p. 12). In addition, small but meaningful INCLE and ICITAP contributions have been given to promote interagency cooperation in the interior ministry, institute elec-

²² Hambali, tried in absentia, and five other terrorist suspects were eventually convicted in connection with the plot and received life sentences.

tronic entry- and exit-control systems at the Phnom Penh and Siem Reap airports and promulgate anti-money-laundering legislation. An integral component of this latter effort has involved the setting up of a national financial investigation unit that has the statutory authority to apply controls to non-banking institutions, such as casinos and hotels.²³ Finally, \$50,000 in DoS ATA monies has been used to help with the installation of an integrated computerized network for collecting, cross-referencing, and analyzing traveler data to identify potential terrorists and criminals. Undertaken as part of the S/CT's TIP initiative,²⁴ a nascent "framework" system has been up and running since 2007 (DoS, 2006, p. 352).

On a broader socioeconomic and political level, Cambodia has received considerable assistance to support the development of transparent democratic governance, increase the capacity of human rights monitoring organizations, and improve bureaucratic macro and micro fiscal management. More than \$14 million in ESF was allocated to underwrite these initiatives in FY 2006, with an additional \$13.5 million slated for FY 2007 (DoS, 2006, p. 351; USAID, 2007).

It would be wrong, however, to characterize Cambodia's internal security architecture as an all-embracing "Leviathan." A lack of resources and expertise continues to hinder the ability of the police to conduct systematic investigations and CT sweeps, while pervasive and endemic corruption serves as a perennial source of bureaucratic dysfunctionality eroding and undercutting governing legitimacy. Moreover, despite passing anti-money-laundering legislation, Cambodia has yet to formulate, much less enact, implementing regulations. This, combined with a financial investigation unit that is badly underresourced, means that the country effectively exists in the absence of any viable system of fiscal control and regulation.²⁵ Until these gaps are addressed, Cambodia will remain susceptible as a potential springboard for harboring and facilitating terrorist (and other criminal) designs.

²³ Author interview, Phnom Penh, January 2008.

²⁴ For more on TIP, see DoS, 2002.

²⁵ Author interviews, Phnom Penh, January 2008.

Assessment

Superficially, Cambodia has many of the attributes of a terrorist-friendly nation, including relatively lax border control, endemic corruption, entrenched criminal activity, a small and marginalized Muslim population, and an essentially unregulated banking and finance sector. In reality, however, the international terrorist threat in (and to) the country is minimal and is likely to remain so. While foreign religious extremists have definitely sought to proselytize and financially co-opt the Cham/Malay population, there is no evidence to suggest that militant jihadism has taken root. Cambodian Muslims remain largely apolitical and inward-looking, with little interest in (or knowledge of) the plights of co-religionists abroad. By contrast, their overriding interests revolve around economic survival, educating their youth, and preserving their cultural heritage.

Further vitiating the militant threat in Cambodia is the significant progress that has been made in terms of internal security and CT. While problems remain, the available space for outside extremists has definitely shrunk over the past several years and is certainly not as great as commonly depicted.

Perhaps most importantly, the Hun Sen government has carefully nurtured its relationship with the indigenous Cham and Malay community and has worked strenuously to allay any concerns that Cambodia's role as a partner (albeit a junior one) in the global campaign against violent Islamist extremism will lead to repression of Khmer Islam. Indeed, in many ways, Phnom Penh has been vocally explicit in its defense of the country's Muslims, publicly dismissing Bangkok's 2007 claims that Chams were participating in Islamist violence taking place in Thailand's deep south.

How might this situation change in the future? A major terrorist attack, particularly against a Western target, could result in pressure from the United States to "get tough." Although it is an unlikely prospect, a violent overreaction on the part of the Hun Sen government could well lead to a dangerous radicalization of a Muslim minority community that continues to exist against a backdrop of real socio-economic marginalization. As discussed in Chapter Two, this at least

partially explains the surge of violence that has been such a prominent feature of the southern Thai landscape since 2004 and could certainly be seen as a precursor of what might occur in Cambodia under similar circumstances.

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